

20th ANNIVERSARY COLLECTOR'S SPECIAL



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SPAWN



DEDICATED TO
WANDA
KOLOMYJEC



Jim Downing – A man whose past is shrouded in mystery, and connected intimately to the very fabric of the Spawn mythos, Jim is the world's newest Hellspawn... and so much more. Having spent years in a deep coma, Jim's main drive is piecing together the fragments of the man he was, in an effort to discover the man he truly is.



The Program – A clandestine military operation with deep-rooted ties to events from throughout Spawn's 20-year existence. Hidden within the secrets of The Program, also known as Project: RAGNOROK, lies the truth Jim seeks, and the dark heart of a past better left buried.



Sara Johnston – When Jim woke from his coma (issue #185), Sara was the first person to greet him on the other side of the darkness. A woman of strong faith, Sara's connection to Jim will test her in ways she could never imagine.



PREVIOUSLY IN SPAWN

A new soul has taken up the mantle of the Hellspawn. Following the death of Al Simmons, coma patient, Jim Downing, awoke into a world and life he didn't recognize, possessed of a power beyond comprehension.

Aided by Sara, the passionate and deeply-spiritual nurse whose faith has been fractured by their connection, Marc, a young, ambitious reporter-turned-manager with an eye for detail and the goal of taking Jim's "story" global, and Clown, the demonic nemesis of Al Simmons who now serves as mentor and ally, Jim must uncover his past to unlock his full potential.

The unique mixture of Hell born and Heavenly powers at Jim's command has made him a target of enemies both old and new, culminating in an epic showdown with Malebolgia, former Lord of the 8th Circle of Hell. The aftermath of their battle leveled the maze-like alleyways known as "Rat City" and brought forth new revelations. The ramifications of these events, and the truths revealed, are far reaching and tie directly to Jim's quest to uncover his past. A quest that begins ... now...

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I REMEMBER
THE PAIN. THEN...
THE LIGHT.

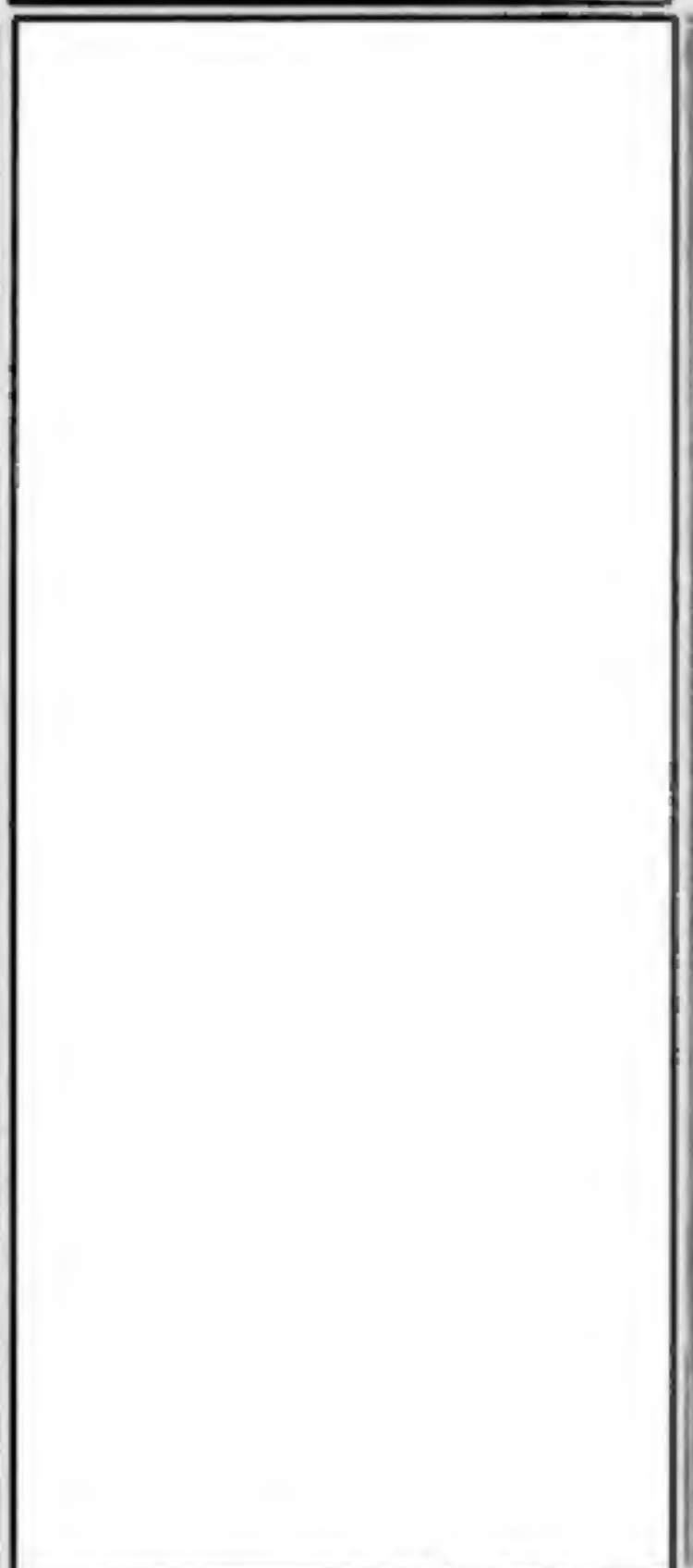


I WISH
I KNEW...
WHY?!

WHY IS IT SO
GODDAMN
HARD TO
REMEMBER
THINGS?

LIKE SOMEONE
BURNING A
HOLE IN THE
MIDDLE OF ME.
A HOLE SO BIG
EVERYTHING
POURS OUT
OF ME.


THEN IT
STOPS.
AND ALL I
FEEL IS
THE COLD
AND HEAVY
PRESENCE OF
DARKNESS.



INSTEAD I'VE GOT
EVERYBODY ELSE
FEEDING ME CRAP
ABOUT MY PAST.
EVEN THOUGH NONE
OF THEM WERE
AROUND WHEN
WHATEVER IT IS
THAT HAPPENED TO
ME... ACTUALLY
HAPPENED!

THE OBVIOUS PART IS I'VE
'CHANGED'-- BUT HOW?!
AND WHY? IT'S JUST A
BUNCH OF SCATTERED
IMAGES. I CAN'T PIECE
ANY OF IT TOGETHER. AND
EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY
EYES ALL I FEEL IS PAIN.

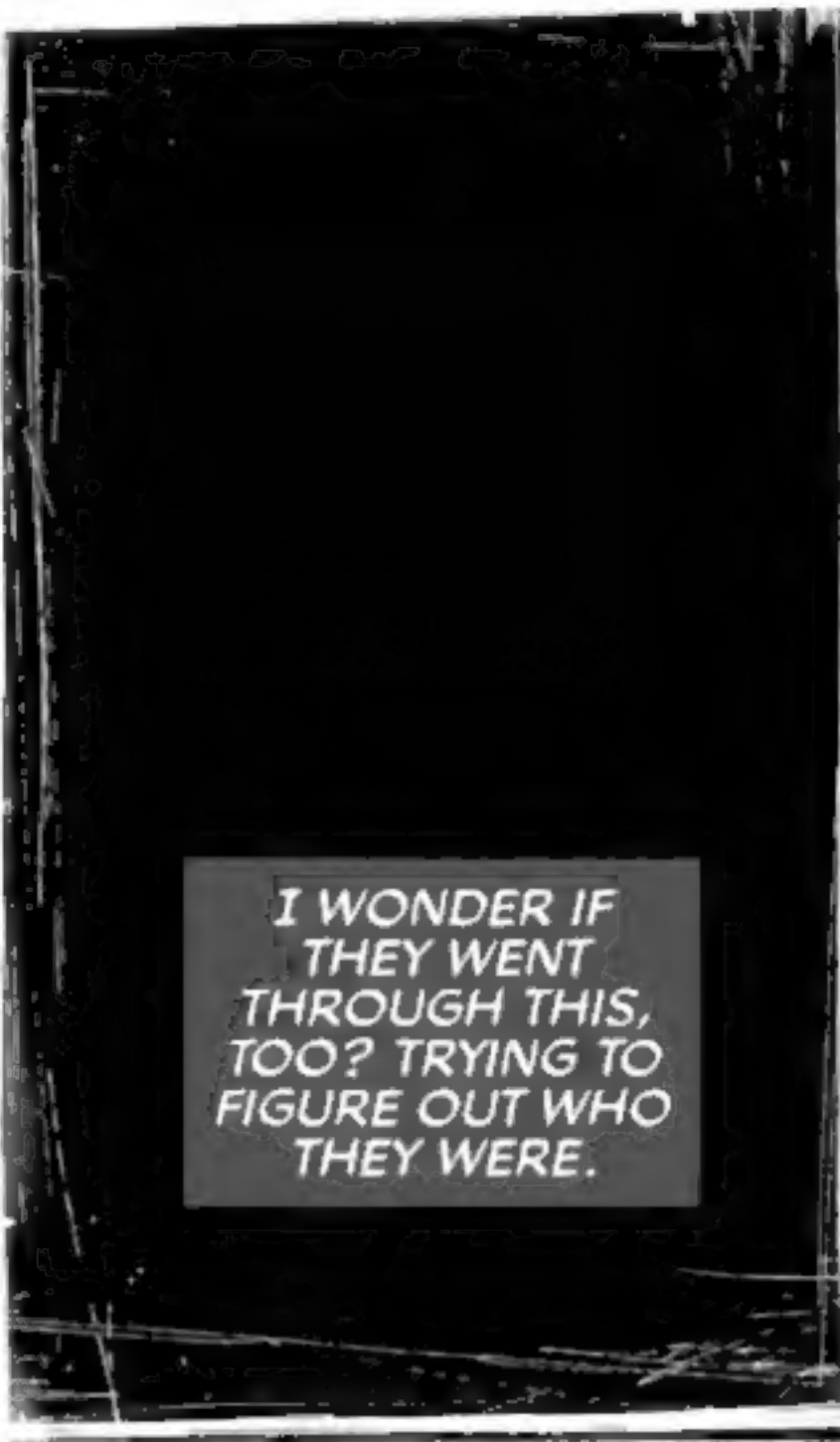




EVERY NIGHT IT WAS THE
SAME. PAIN. LIGHT. COLD.
DARKNESS. AGAIN AND
AGAIN, UNTIL IT FINALLY
WOKE ME FROM MY COMA.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY I BARELY
SLEEP AT NIGHT-- MAYBE I
WASN'T SUPPOSED TO WAKE UP.
MAYBE I WAS SUPPOSED TO
STAY WHERE IT'S BLACK.

LIKE THE OTHERS.



I WONDER IF
THEY WENT
THROUGH THIS,
TOO? TRYING TO
FIGURE OUT WHO
THEY WERE.



OR DID THEY DRIVE
THEMSELVES CRAZY,
LIKE I'M DOING NOW,
HOPING TO PIECE IT
ALL TOGETHER WITH
NOTHING BUT A FEW
FRAGMENTS FROM
THE PAST.

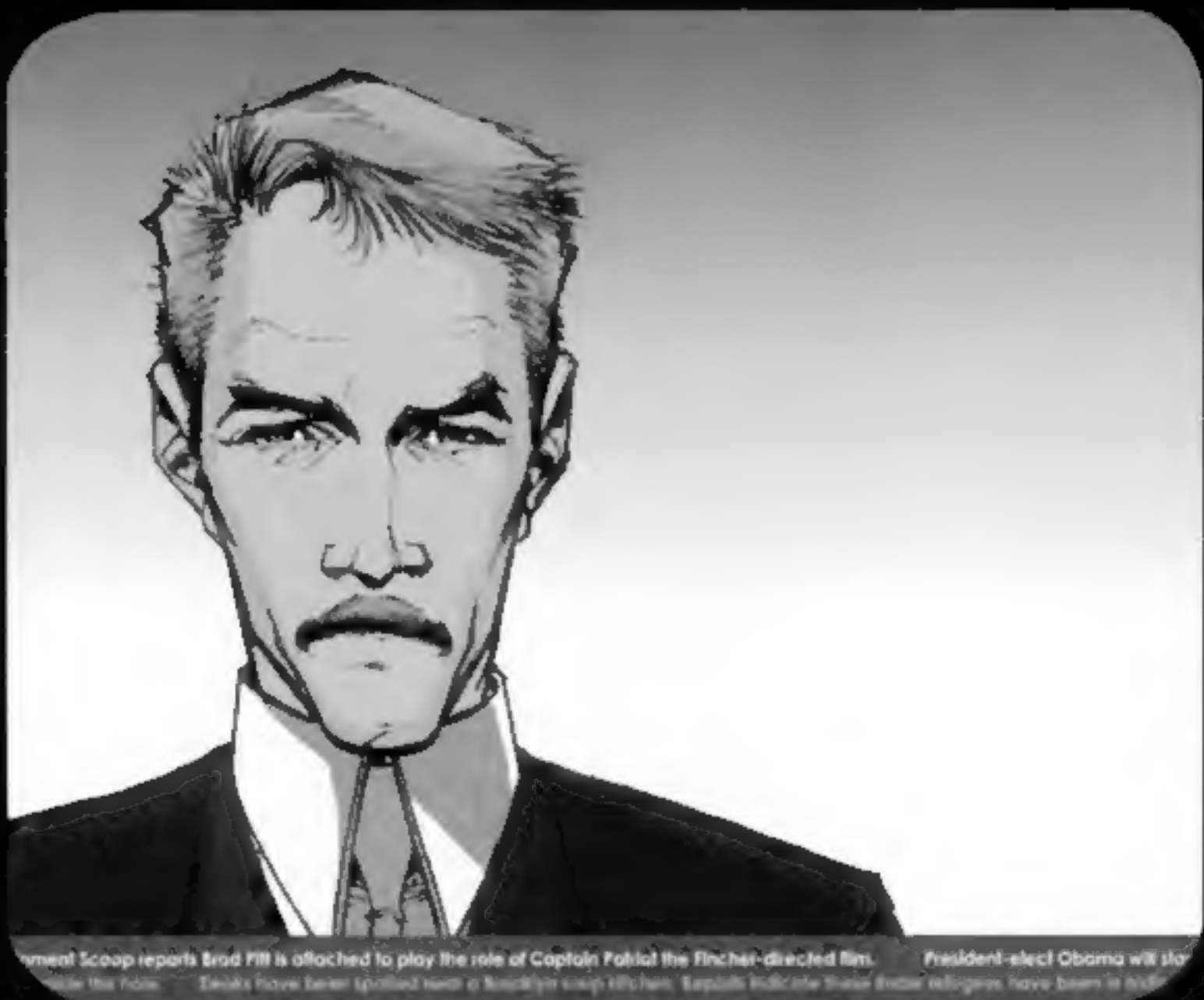




WE BEGIN TONIGHT'S NEWSCAST WITH THE SAME UNRESOLVED QUESTION WE HAVE BEEN ASKING SINCE THIS REMARKABLE INDIVIDUAL CAME INTO THE PUBLIC'S AWARENESS...
"WHO IS JIM DOWNING?"

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, NEARLY EVERY NEWS OUTLET IN THIS COUNTRY HAS ATTEMPTED TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON HIS PAST. OUR OWN ORGANIZATION HAS HAD A TEAM OF JOURNALISTS TRYING TO TRACK DOWN ANY DETAIL, ANY CLUE AS TO MR. DOWNING'S PAST. TO DATE, NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO FIND ANYTHING, A FACT YOU'RE READING OR HEARING ABOUT WITH MORE AND MORE FREQUENCY.

GIVEN HIS NEAR MIRACULOUS ACTIONS AND SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE SURVIVAL FROM A CLOSE RANGE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT, ONE WOULD PRESUME THAT ANY PERSON WIELDING THE INCREDIBLE POWERS THAT HE SEEMS TO POSSESS WOULD HAVE A STREAM OF PEOPLE COMING FORWARD WITH BACKGROUND INFORMATION. SHOCKINGLY, NO PERSON OR DOCUMENT HAS SURFACED TO GIVE ANY INDICATION THAT THIS NEW 'SAVIOR' DIDN'T JUST APPEAR OUT OF THIN AIR.



IN THIS DAY AND AGE, WITH SO MUCH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SURROUNDING US EVERY MINUTE, HOW CAN THE SEARCH FOR A SINGLE MAN'S IDENTITY BE SO COMPLETELY DEVOID OF **ANY** CLUES?! IT SEEMS IMPROBABLE. YET THAT IS WHAT WE ARE FACING WITH MR. DOWNING TODAY. AS MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE GLOBE CONTINUE TO INSIST THAT HE IS NONE OTHER THAN JESUS HIMSELF-- THOSE OF US LOOKING FOR MORE PRACTICAL ANSWERS MIGHT SOON BE JOINING THE ZEALOT BLOGGERS IN CONCLUDING THAT IF NO NEWS AGENCY, GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION OR CITIZEN CAN TELL US WHERE HE CAME FROM, THEN THE ONLY POSSIBLE CONCLUSION IS THAT HE **DID** SIMPLY APPEAR 'OUT OF THE HEAVENS'.

AND THE THOUGHT THAT GOD'S ONLY SON MIGHT TRULY BE WALKING AMONG US IS SUCH A STAGGERING DEVELOPMENT THAT MOST OF US CAN'T EVEN COMPREHEND WHAT THAT MIGHT ACTUALLY MEAN FOR AMERICA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD.

WHY NOW? WHY, AFTER ALL THIS TIME, AFTER ALL THE PRAYERS AND PLEAS FOR GOD TO SHOW ANY SIGN OF HIS EXISTENCE, WOULD THIS MAN BE THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION NOW? SHOULD WE JUST MAKE OUR LEAP OF FAITH AND ACCEPT IT, OR SHOULD WE BE ALARMED THAT SOMEONE WITH HIS ABILITIES DOESN'T KNOW WHO HE IS HIMSELF?



SO, YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT IN THIS DAY AND AGE, WITH ALL THE MODERN MARVELS OF TECHNOLOGY AT OUR FINGERTIPS-- SMART PHONES, FACIAL RECOGNITION SOFTWARE, 24-HOUR NEWS-- THE ALMOST ENDLESS REACH OF THE WORLDWIDE WEB-- THAT NOT ONE SINGLE PERSON HAS **ANY** IDEA AS TO **WHO THIS MAN IS!!!**

I'M NOT FALLING FOR THAT!

YOU WANT TO CONVINCE YOURSELF THAT JIM DOWNING IS THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST... THEN **GO RIGHT AHEAD!** IT'S A FREE COUNTRY! BUT YOU KEEP YOUR RADICAL, LIBERAL OPINIONS TO YOURSELF BECAUSE I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT THE PERSON I WAS **RAISED** TO BELIEVE IN IS NOW THIS **BLOND HAIRE SURFER BUM!**

THE BIBLE **I** READ MADE NO INDICATION THAT JESUS WOULD RETURN TO EARTH AND RANDOMLY USE HIS POWERS ONLY WHEN HE FELT LIKE IT. **OR WORSE ...** THAT HE WOULD SOMEHOW BE EMBARRASSED TO EVEN ACKNOWLEDGE HE HAD THEM! **NO!** WHAT JESUS WOULD DO IS COME BACK TO EARTH AND SHOW EVERY PERSON ON THE PLANET THAT THERE'S ONLY ONE GOD AND ONE RELIGION, AND **HE WOULD UNITE US!** NOT HIDE FROM US OR COWER AWAY WHENEVER WE WANTED TO TAKE HIS PICTURE.

THAT'S NOT A MESSIAH... THAT'S A FRAUD! YOU CAN TELL HIM I SAID SO!

THIS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IS ANOTHER CONSPIRACY COOKED UP BY THE LEFT LEANING SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT IN THE HOPES OF GETTING US TO BE SUBMISSIVE WITHOUT ANY CRITICAL THINKING! I'VE SEEN THIS TRICK BEFORE-- THOUGH NOT TO THESE **ABSURD LEVELS--** AND IT'S **NOT** GOING TO WORK!



BUT THE PAIN-- IT ISN'T
BLOCKING EVERYTHING
OUT NOW. I'M STARTING
TO 'SEE' MORE OF THE
PAST. MORE GLIMPSES.



AND SOME OF IT... I... I
ACTUALLY FEEL MIGHT BE TRUE.



THAT. SOMEHOW, MY AMBITIONS
GAVE ME POWER OVER OTHERS. AND
IN MY SEARCH FOR SOME GLORIOUS
DISCOVERY-- SOME SCIENTIFIC BREAK-
THROUGH-- I TEAMED WITH MEN
WHOSE RUTHLESS CUNNING WAS
THEIR STRONGEST ATTRIBUTE.



WE MANIPULATED PEOPLE.
EXPERIMENTED ON THEIR
BODIES. DISTORTED THEM
THROUGH SCIENCE.

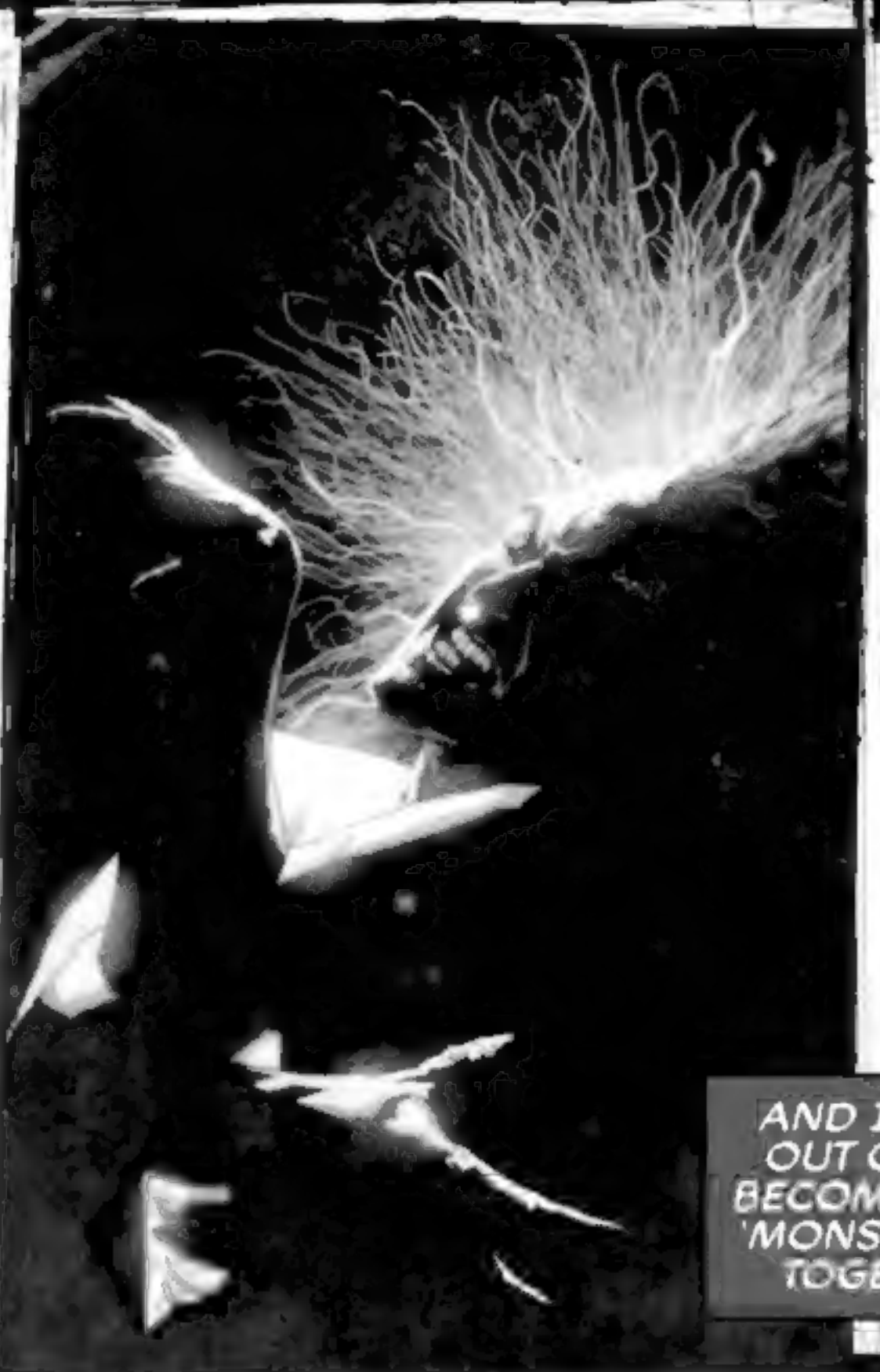
AND THEY SUFFERED. GOD,
HOW THEY SUFFERED!



WHY? BECAUSE
I NEEDED SOME
FEELING OF GLORY?
BECAUSE I NEEDED
THE MONEY?



NO!-- IT WAS PERFECTION!
THAT'S WHAT I CRAVED.



AND I TOOK THAT DESIRE
OUT ON OTHER HUMANS,
BECOMING THE CREATOR OF
'MONSTERS.' PUTTING THEM
TOGETHER ONE BY ONE.



BUT THEY
ALL FAILED!

EVERY LAST
ONE OF THEM.



I REMEMBER THAT
CLEARLY NOW-- HOW
EVERYONE TURNED ON
ME AND I COULDN'T
TRUST ANY OF THEM.
EVER AGAIN!



PROJECT
RAGNOROK
CANCELLED

SO I STOLE IT. ALL THE
SECRETS THEY'D BEEN
HIDING FROM ME.



EVEN FROM
THOSE THAT SAID
THEY "LOVED ME."



WHY? BECAUSE
THEY WERE JEALOUS.
THEY KNEW THEY'D
NEVER BE PERFECT.
NOT LIKE ME!

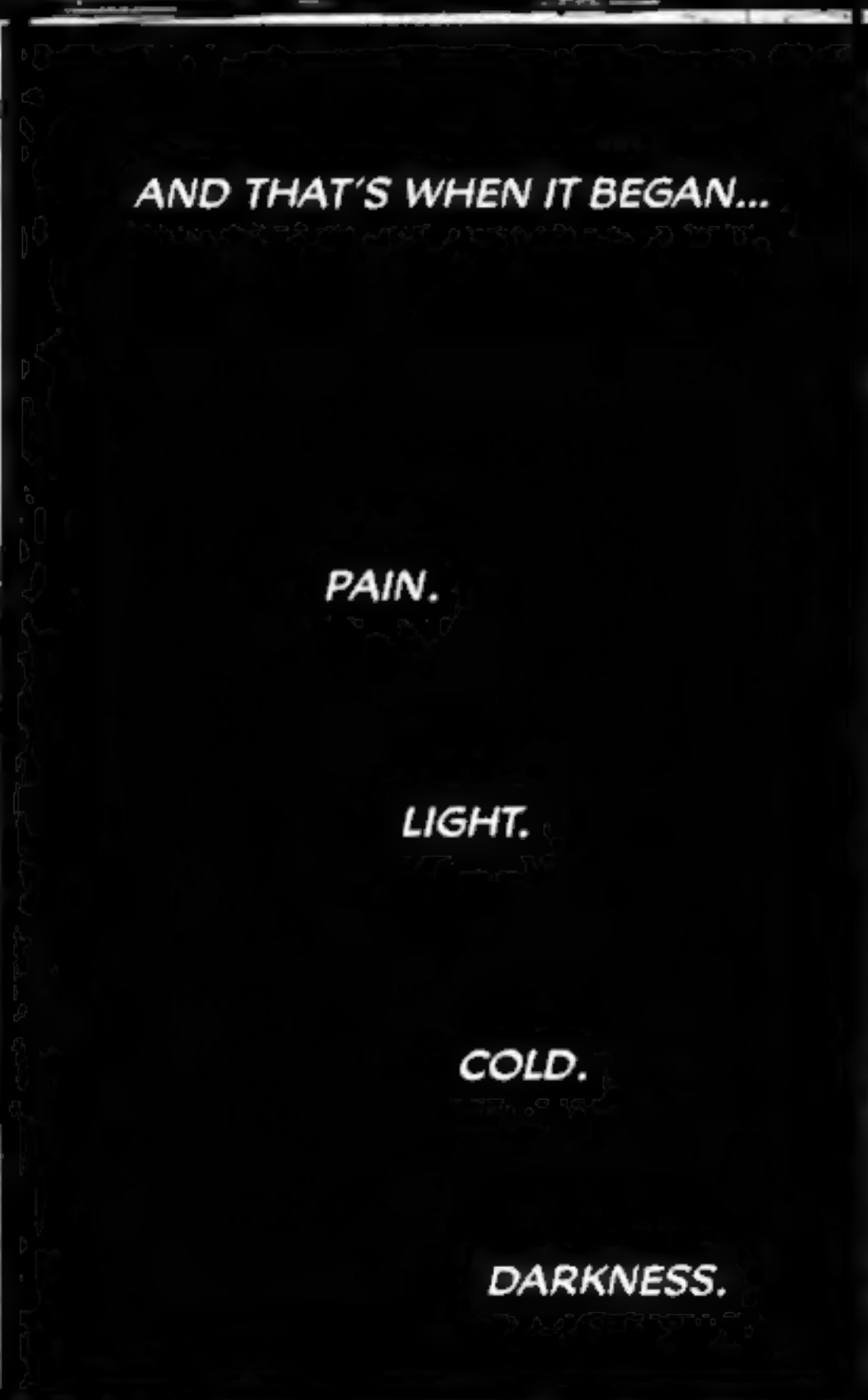


BUT IT WAS ALL BULLSHIT!
THEY SAID IT WOULDN'T WORK.
THAT IT WAS TOO DANGEROUS.
THEY ALSO SAID I'D BECOME
CRAZY... DELUSIONAL.



NOT LIKE ME.

AND THAT'S WHEN IT BEGAN...



PAIN.

LIGHT.

COLD.

DARKNESS.



IT'S ALL I CAN REMEMBER NOW.



THAT AND THE FACE
OF A STRANGER.

THEN NOTHING.

NOTHING BUT
TOTAL BLACK.
GOD KNOWS
HOW LONG I'D
BEEN THERE.
A YEAR? TWO?
MAYBE EVEN TEN.
NO ONE SEEMS
TO KNOW.

BUT I'M AWAKE NOW.
REBORN. SOMEHOW
ENDOWED WITH
POWERS SO STRONG
THEY CAN RESURRECT
THE DEAD.

AND INSTEAD OF
BEING AFRAID OF ME,
THE WORLD WANTS TO
CALL ME A 'MESSIAH'.
THEY WANT TO MAKE
ME INTO THEIR GLOBAL
CELEBRITY WITHOUT
ASKING IF THAT'S WHAT
I WANT. HALF THE
PEOPLE I KNOW STILL
THINK I'M JUST SOME
HUMAN HEALER.

SOME MYSTERY THEY
HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE
TO SOLVE YET.

THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT
THE REST-- AND IF THEY DID,
THEY WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT
TO DO ABOUT IT ANYWAY.

DEMONS. ANGELS... SPAWNS.
THEY'RE ALL HERE UNDERNEATH
THEIR NOSES-- AND THE SCARY
PART IS THEY'RE COMPLETELY
UNAWARE OF IT.





I GUESS I WAS TOO.

EVEN BEFORE MY COMA THEY
MUST HAVE BEEN HERE. I MUST
HAVE BEEN AS BLIND AND
IGNORANT AS EVERYONE ELSE.

BUT NOT NOW.

NOW I'M FULLY AWAKE... AND I'VE
SEEN THEM. AND ALL THEY WANT TO
DO IS DESTROY US JUST SO THEY CAN
BEAT THE OTHER SIDE. HEAVEN. HELL.
NEITHER ONE GIVES A SHIT ABOUT
EARTH IF IT MEANS THEY CAN WIN
THEIR WAR AGAINST EACH OTHER.

WE'RE JUST A STEPPING STONE.
AN AFTERTHOUGHT. BUT THEY
MADE A MISTAKE.

A HUGE MISTAKE!

A black and white comic book illustration of the character Spawn. He is standing on a rooftop, looking down with a menacing expression. He has a large, muscular build, a dark, textured suit, and a mask with multiple eyes. His arms are outstretched, and he appears to be in a state of intense power or rage. In the background, a city skyline is visible, with a prominent building featuring a large, arched window. The overall tone is dark and dramatic.

BY GIVING ME
POWER!

I DON'T CARE WHAT
THEY WANT OR WHY!
THEY'RE DEAD!

IF ANY OF THEM TRIES TO HURT SARA
OR MARC OR SUSAN-- I SWEAR, I'LL
KILL EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM!

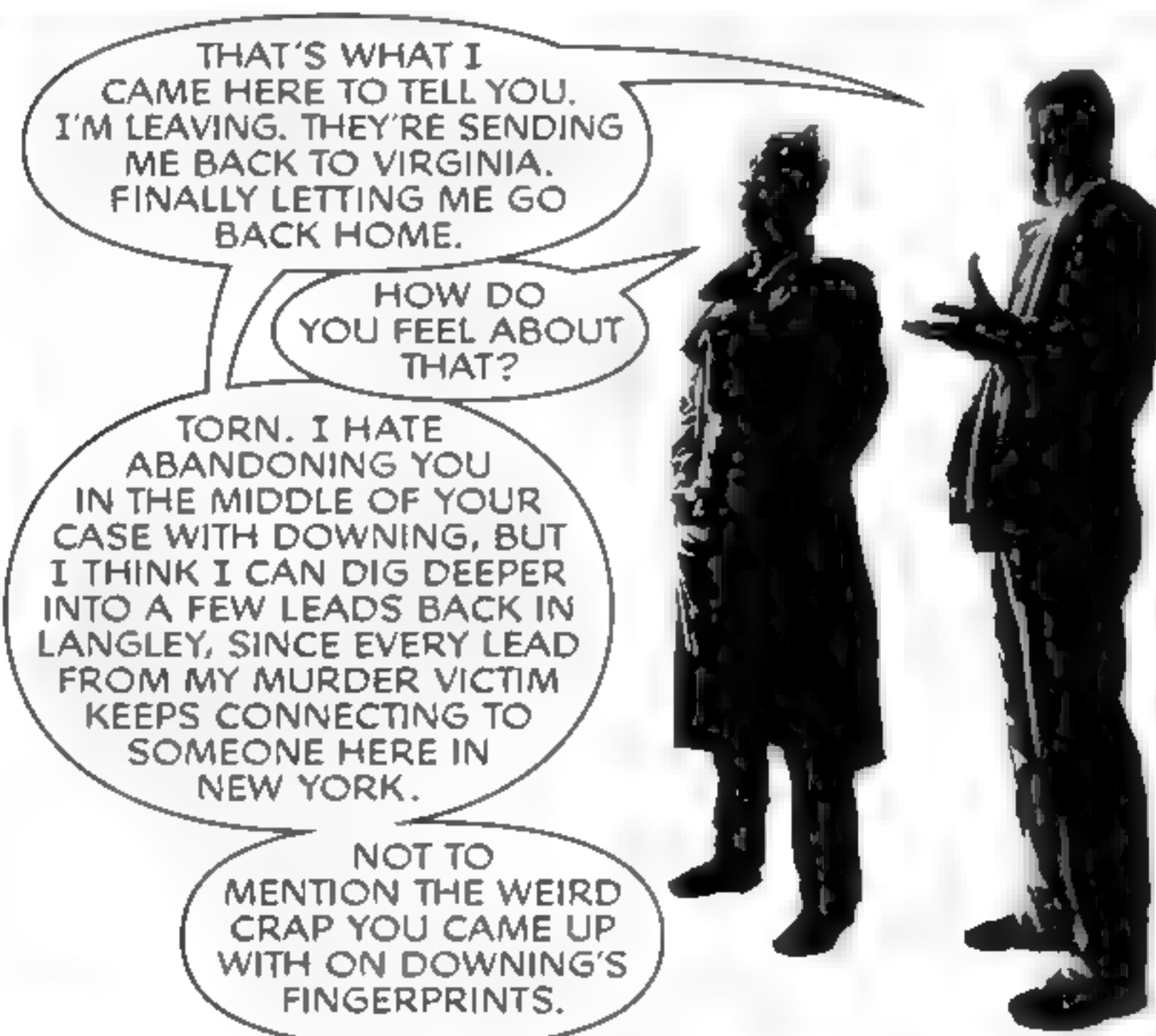
CLOWN SAID THEY WERE AFRAID OF ME--
THAT I'M SOME TICKING TIME BOMB OR SOME-
THING. FINE! LET THEM BE SCARED. MAYBE
THAT'LL KEEP THEM AWAY FOR A WHILE.

IF NOT... THEN LET 'EM COME! GOD, SATAN.
I DON'T CARE! I'LL TAKE THEM ALL ON!

WHATEVER THEY'VE MADE ME-- WHATEVER I'VE
BECOME-- THEY'LL SCREAM MY NAME BEFORE
THEY DIE! SPAWN! AND I'LL NEVER AGAIN BE...

THEIR GODDAMN

SPAWN



Argentina.



CAPTAIN,
I THINK
WE FOUND
WHAT WE'RE
LOOKING
FOR.

WHAT
DO THE
BOXES
SAY?

IT JUST
HAS 'THE
PROJECT'
WRITTEN ON
THEM.

AND
THE FILES
INSIDE?



THEY
SAY THE
SAME THING--
THOUGH HALF
OF THEM ARE
EMPTY. WHAT
DO WE DO
NOW?



BURN IT ALL.
JUST LIKE WE WERE
ORDERED TO DO.
DON'T LEAVE ANY-
THING BEHIND.





DROP
THE BOXES
AND STEP
BACK.

NOW!

Jesus



FIRE!!



BRANKKA

BRANKKA
BRANKKA

BRANKKA



BAD
IDEA.



I NEED
SOMETHING
FROM YOU,
SOLDIER...




I WANT
TO KNOW
WHY YOU WERE
BURNING
THOSE
FILES!

CLOWN AND BLUDD KEEP
SAYING IT'S SOMEHOW
CONNECTED TO ME. THAT
IT'LL FEED OFF MY EMOTIONS
AS IT TRIES TO PROTECT
ME. I CAN FEEL THE
CHAINS SNAPPING AND
THE CAPE WHIPPING ITSELF
INTO A FRENZY



LIKE IT'S HUNGRY.



F*CK
YOU!



WANTING TO FEEL

I THOUGHT HE
MIGHT SAY THAT...
AND SO DID MY
COSTUME!

AND IT DOESN'T LIKE
HIS ANSWER ANY
MORE THAN I DO


I CAN FEEL ITS
ANGER-- EVEN
WORSE THAN MINE




AND FOR A COSTUME
BORN IN HELL--
THAT HUNGER CAN BE
HORRIFYING!



IT TAKES
EVERYTHING I
HAVE TRYING
TO HOLD IT
BACK. OTHER-
WISE IT WOULD
SIMPLY RIP THIS
GUY APART



NOW ITS BLOOD LUST IS
BEGINNING TO SEEP INTO ME
BUT I NEED ANSWERS--
BEFORE I LET THE COSTUME
TAKE ME OVER



BECAUSE I'M
ABOUT TO FADE INTO
DARKNESS AGAIN



I NEED TO GRAB ON TO SOMETHING BESIDES THE PAIN

LIKE SARA

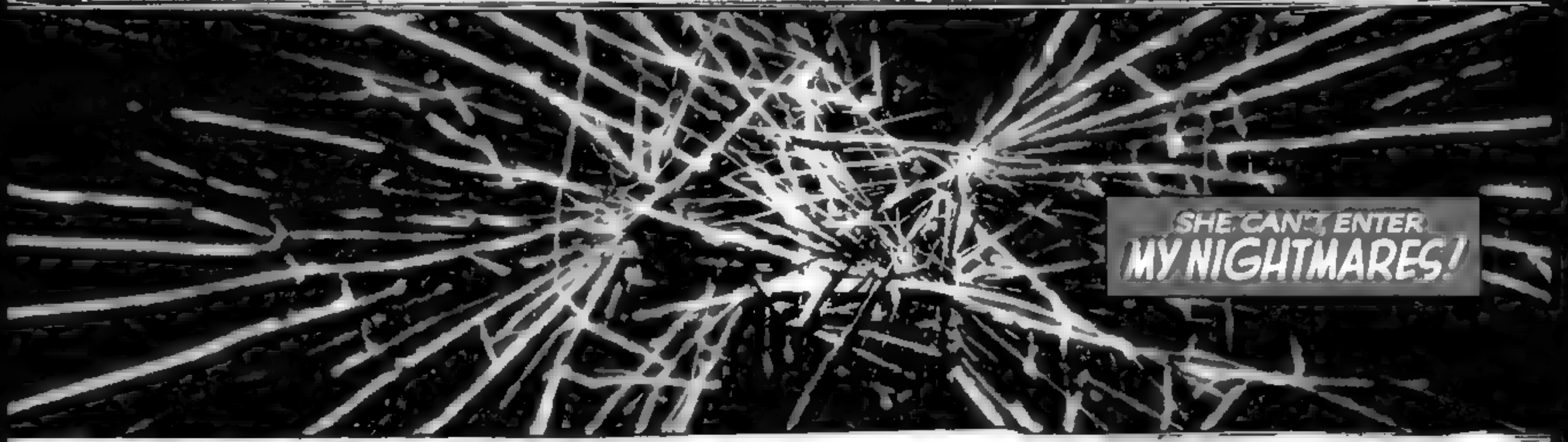
NOT THE OTHER THINGS

JUST SARA

SHE'S THE ONLY ONE THAT'S THERE FOR ME. THAT I CAN COUNT ON. EVERYONE ELSE HAS AN AGENDA OF THEIR OWN. SO WHY DO I KEEP HURTING HER? ALL SHE WANTS IS FOR ME TO FIND MY PAST AND TO BE HAPPY.

TO ENJOY LIFE AND STOP WORRYING. WHY CAN'T I DO THAT?! WHY CAN'T I JUST KEEP THE EVIL INSIDE, INSTEAD OF HAVING HER FEEL IT? I SHOULD HAVE NEVER TAKEN HER INTO THE SHADOWS

WHAT WAS I THINKING?





WE HAVE NEW INFORMATION ON EVENTS THAT CAUSED FOUR SQUARE BLOCKS OF NEW YORK CITY TO COLLAPSE IN ON THEMSELVES EARLIER TODAY. INITIAL RUMORS OF A TERRORIST ATTACK ON THE CITY CAUSED PANIC AND SOME ISOLATED CASES OF RIOTING. POLICE WERE QUICK TO RESPOND, AND HAVE DETAINED A HANDFUL OF SUSPECTS.

IT WAS QUICKLY DETERMINED IN FACT THAT THE SITE-- A RUNDOWN NEIGHBORHOOD OF ABANDONED WAREHOUSES AND TENEMENTS KNOWN LOCALLY AS "RAT CITY"-- WAS FELLED BY THE COLLAPSE OF AN OLD, FORGOTTEN GAS LINE. ORIGINALLY, IT WAS THOUGHT THAT A MILD EARTHQUAKE MAY HAVE PLAYED A PART IN THE COLLAPSE, BUT INFORMATION NOW POINTS STRONGLY TO THE CRUMBLING PIPELINE.

WE'LL REPORT FURTHER INFORMATION AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE.

ALSO IN NEW YORK CITY, JIM DOWNING, THE MYSTERIOUS 'FAITH HEALER,' HAS CALLED ANOTHER PRESS CONFERENCE. SPECULATION HAS IT THAT HE WILL OFFICIALLY CONFIRM THE NAME AND INTENT OF THE FOUNDATION HE'D PREVIOUSLY SAID HE WAS PUTTING TOGETHER.



MIRACLE WORKER JIM DOWNING IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE THE STAGE THIS AFTERNOON, IN YET ANOTHER PRESS CONFERENCE. WHETHER BY ACCIDENT OR DESIGN, HE'S KEPT TO HIMSELF FOR *JUST LONG ENOUGH* THAT THE BUZZ ABOUT HIS POSSIBLE DIVINITY HAS DIED DOWN.

SOMEWHAT.

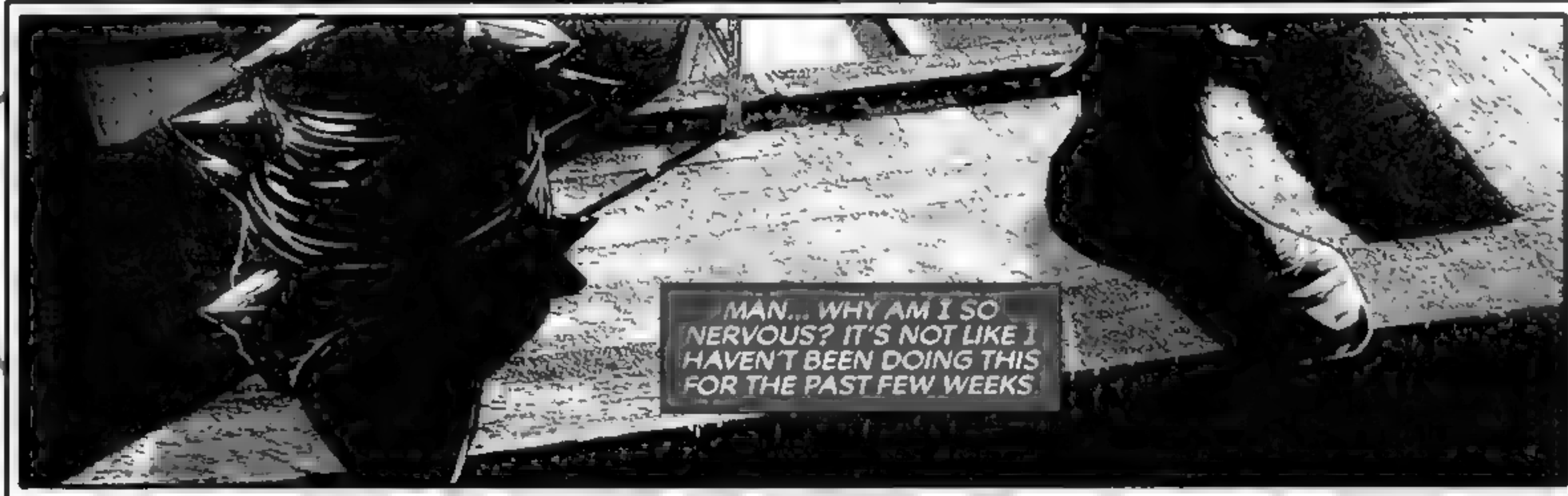
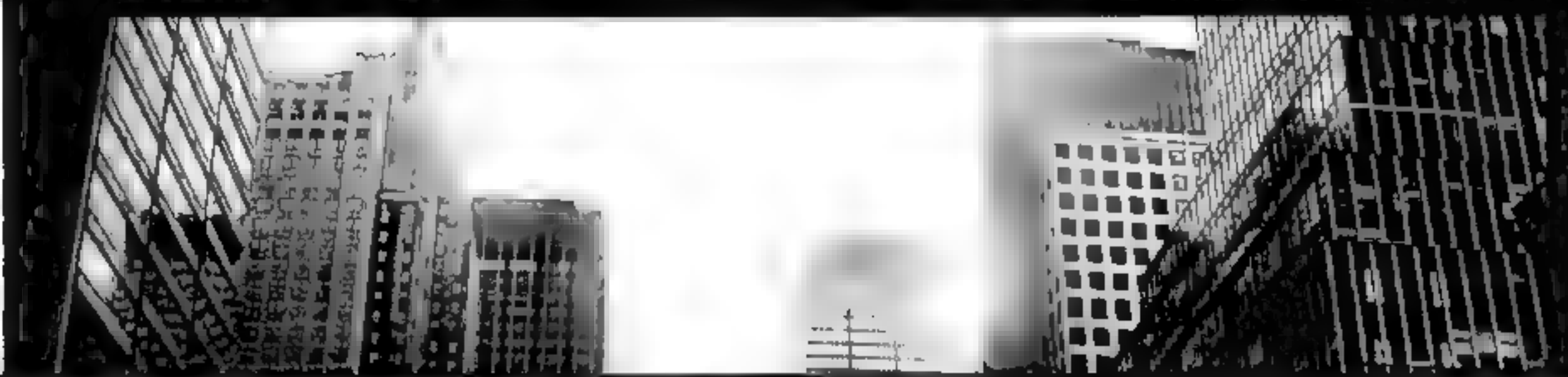
THERE'S NO DENYING HIS APPEAL TO THIS CITY'S IMAGINATION. AFTER HEALING A MEMBER OF THE PAPARAZZI, HE FOLLOWED THE AGE-OLD ADMONITION AND ALSO HEALED HIMSELF. THE MAN CONTINUES TO HOLD OUR ATTENTION, AND HE'S A BIG ENOUGH PLAYER THAT HE'S BEING ALLOWED TO SET THE PACE. THE NETWORK ATTENTION HE'S BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS AFTERNOON'S FESTIVITIES TELLS US THAT HE'S NOT GOING TO DRIFT AWAY.

FOLLOWING HIS ANNOUNCEMENT LAST WEEK, AN ALMOST CAMPAIGN-STYLE HINT AT HIS BROAD INTENTIONS TO FORM A CHARITABLE FOUNDATION, IT'S REASONABLE TO SPECULATE THAT DOWNING NOW INTENDS TO LAY OUT SOME SPECIFICS. HOW SPECIFIC CAN HE BE, THOUGH? HE'S IMPLYING THAT HE INTENDS TO TRADE IN MIRACLES-- AND MIRACLES ARE AWFULLY HARD TO PIN DOWN.



HERE IT COMES! YET ANOTHER PRESS CONFERENCE FOR THIS SELF-INVOLVED FREELOADER. THERE ARE *BIGGER* THINGS TO FOCUS ON THAN ANOTHER IN THE LONG LINE OF SEEMINGLY ENDLESS AND INCREASINGLY TIRESOME PRESS CONFERENCES THAT JIM DOWNING SEEMS TO LOVE TO THROW FOR HIMSELF. *NO IDENTITY! NO BACKGROUND!* HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO PUT OUR TRUST IN THIS GUY?! HOW MANY TIMES WILL WE BE FORCED TO LISTEN TO PEOPLE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SYSTEM? AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, IT'S JUST ONE MORE NON-PROFIT LOOKING FOR TAX EXEMPTION TO ESSENTIALLY STEAL FROM OUR GOVERNMENT.

AS IF WE DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE BEING HANDED OUT AFTER THE LATEST BUILDING COLLAPSES IN THE CITY? ONE MORE *PRESS CONFERENCE* IS JUST WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS!



MAN... WHY AM I SO NERVOUS? IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVEN'T BEEN DOING THIS FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS.




TV CAMERAS. PRESS CONFERENCES. I THINK I'M ACTUALLY GETTING PRETTY GOOD WITH BOTH OF THEM.

THEN WHY WON'T THE BUTTERFLIES GO AWAY IN MY STOMACH? I'M ACTING LIKE A SCHOOL KID.

OR MAYBE I KNOW THAT IF THIS PLAN DOESN'T WORK, I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO PROTECT SARA OR MARC. THEY'LL ALWAYS BE IN THE LINE OF FIRE BECAUSE OF ME.

SO THEIR ONLY CHANCE OF NOT BECOMING TARGETS—OR NOT GETTING HURT—IS IF I HIDE EVERYTHING AWAY FROM THEM.

IT'S THE ONLY WAY.



BUT SARA'S GOING
TO BE A HUGE TASK,
SINCE SHE'S ALREADY
SEEN WHAT I CAN DO.
I SAW THE FEAR ON
HER FACE WHEN SHE
CAME OUT OF THE
SHADOWS WITH ME.

WHAT THE HELL WAS GOING
THROUGH MY BRAIN? OF COURSE
SHE'D BE TRAUMATIZED-- WHO
WOULDN'T BE? WHAT WAS I
THINKING?

*See Issue #204-- Todd

SO NOW
I NEED TO
MAKE THIS
RIGHT

BECAUSE IF I'VE BETRAYED
BOTH HEAVEN AND HELL--
LIKE MALEBOLGIA SAID.



...I CAN
ONLY IMAGINE
WHAT THEY'RE
CAPABLE OF
SENDING MY
WAY.

FIRST OFF, I'D
LIKE TO THANK ALL OF
YOU FOR COMING OUT AGAIN
TODAY. AS I MENTIONED IN
MY FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE-- I
WAS IN THE PROCESS OF STARTING
A CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
THAT WOULD HELP RAISE
AWARENESS OF THOSE SUFFERING
FROM DEBILITATING
DISEASES AND OTHER
HEALTH ISSUES.

I ALSO SAID
THAT I'D UNDERGO
A BATTERY OF TESTING
TO CONCLUDE WHETHER
I COULD USE MY 'HEALING'
POWERS ON ANY OF THE
UNFORTUNATE INDIVIDUALS.
PRELIMINARY TESTS ARE
UNDERWAY, AND MORE
EXTENSIVE VERSIONS OF
EACH OF THOSE TESTS
WILL BE CONDUCTED
LATER THIS WEEK.

BUT THAT ISN'T
WHY I'M HERE TODAY.
INSTEAD, IT IS WITH
GREAT PRIDE THAT I OFFI-
CIALLY ANNOUNCE THE
OPENING OF THE
'RESTORE, RESTRUCTURE
AND RESURRECT
FOUNDATION'.



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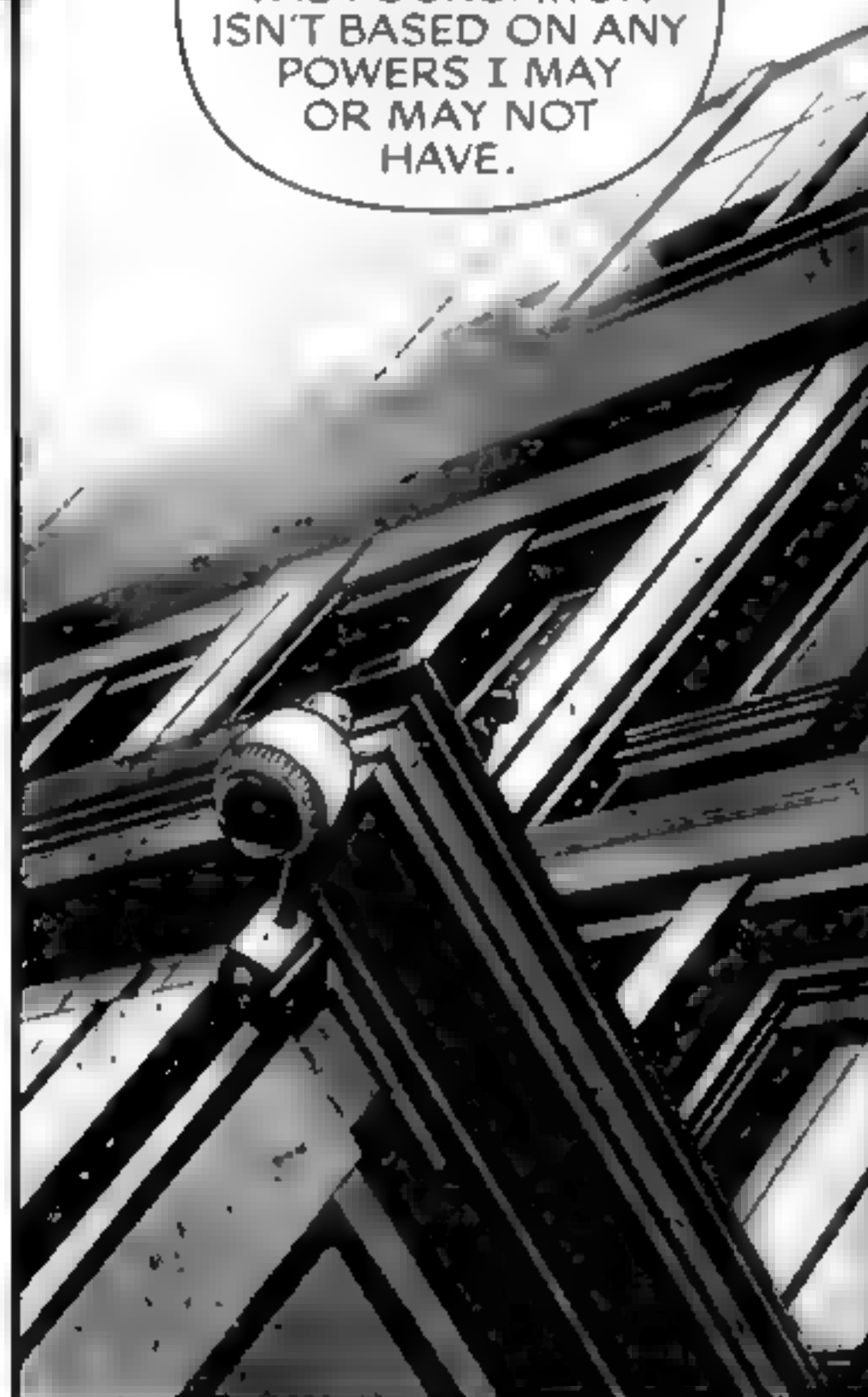
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AND BEFORE
ANY OF YOU ASK--
THE ANSWER IS
"NO." THE NAME OF
THE FOUNDATION
ISN'T BASED ON ANY
POWERS I MAY
OR MAY NOT
HAVE.

IT, INSTEAD,
IMPLIES OUR GOAL
IN HELPING OUT NOT ONLY
PEOPLE, BUT ALSO THEIR
COMMUNITIES AND
NEIGHBORHOODS.



AS MOST OF YOU PROBABLY SAW THE OTHER DAY, I WAS SHOT BY AN ASSAILANT AT A TV STATION. AND AS MOST OF YOU ALSO SAW-- I SOMEHOW SURVIVED THE ORDEAL. BUT FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, AS I LAY THERE ON THE GROUND, A THOUGHT CROSSED MY MIND-- "WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT?"

WHAT IS IT THAT I'M MOST AFRAID OF LOSING IF I DIE RIGHT HERE?

MY ANSWER WAS SIMPLE: THE PEOPLE AROUND ME. BUT I ALSO THOUGHT THAT IT WAS THE ENVIRONMENT THOSE PEOPLE LIVED IN THAT MADE THEM SO SPECIAL AND STRONG.

WITHOUT A SAFE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT, NONE OF THEM MIGHT HAVE TURNED INTO THE PEOPLE THEY ARE TODAY. SO, THE FIRST ACT OF MY NEW FOUNDATION IS TO PURCHASE THE RECENTLY DESTROYED BLOCK OF ABANDONED BUILDINGS AND ALLEYWAYS... THE AREA SOMETIMES CALLED 'RAT CITY'-- AND REBUILD IT INTO A VIBRANT, PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY.

THIS IS THE FIRST STEP IN OUR FOUNDATION IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL TO 'RESTORE, RESTRUCTURE AND RESURRECT'. NOW, IF ANYONE HAS QUESTIONS, I'D BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO ANSWER THEM.

INTERESTING MOVE, DOWNING. BUT WAIT UNTIL YOU HEAR ABOUT MY RESURRECTION

NEXT: "THE PROJECT"



WELCOME, EVERYONE

Back in June of 1992, when the first issue of *Spawn* came out, I wrote a letter in the back of the book summing up why I was walking away from both Marvel and DC Comics. At that time, I was having a pretty successful run on *Spider-Man*, which helped catapult me into the career I had then and continue to have today.

The first sentence of the letter I wrote in the back of *Spawn* #1 was, “**Why Image Comics?**” Let’s now take that same question and bring it into present day, but instead ask, “**Why Image Comics 20 years later?**” Some of the reasons I decided to leave the big two (Marvel and DC) years ago, are still the reasons why I stick around and help Image continue to exist today

The biggest reason for me now sticking around IMAGE COMICS (beyond my own personal wants and needs) is to help provide that “option” I spoke of in my letter—the option of being able to show the creative community that you don’t just have to work for the two biggest comic companies. Although Marvel and DC dominated the industry market shares during my time with them, I was always grateful for the independent companies back in 1992 that showed us you could go off and go in another direction. I think I mentioned a couple companies I supported as a collector in the ‘80’s, like First Comics and Pacific Comics, who helped foster this practice. The comparative of those companies today are Image, Dark Horse, IDW and a handful of others. These companies give you the chance to take your ideas and either have complete ownership and creative input, or at least some variation on that theme.

What any creative individual needs to do is assess if this ‘option’ is a good one for them or not. For me, I had put in my time with the big two, and decided to go off and scratch the creative itch I’d been living with. I wanted to take some of the characters I’d created in high school, put them on paper, and see if any of them stuck. Obviously, the first one that came out of the gate was *Spawn*. As you sit here reading this letter, I’m proud to say we’re at issue #220, so it wasn’t a short-term idea or some throwaway character. *Spawn* was something I was deeply attached to since high school.

I also smile widely when I think of the other books to come out of Image Comics that have had, or are having, success. A book like *The Walking Dead* is an example of this, or even a creator, like Robert Kirkman, who we brought on board as a partner at Image a few years ago. These new books and creative individuals magnify the point that there is still ample opportunity for any creator out there.

The fear of the unknown has made many talented people hesitate in trying out an idea that has been brewing in their head. I’ve met many creative individuals with the mindset that since the world isn’t the same as it was in 1992, when Image Comics first appeared, that lightning can’t strike

twice. I don’t agree with that. I think good product paired with a fair price tag will always win out. Again, Robert Kirkman is a good example. He was willing to totally disengage himself from the big two completely, and instead put all his energy into his own ideas. I’m also seeing people who are coming up through the rank and file who were either, dismissed by or disinterested in working for the big two, but are now putting out their own books with a solid amount of success.

As I’ve gotten older, it becomes less important to me of having a book in the top ten, but rather just having a book, period, that you can make a living off of, and enjoy what you’re creating. Luckily, dozens of other creative stalwarts have allowed Image Comics the opportunity of publishing their books.

Twenty years of creativity springing up in front of my eyes only reinforces the pride I’ve had in watching others succeed.

The initial foundation of Image Comics was ably put together by the original founders, and continues to this day with the current crop of partners—Marc Silvestri, Erik Larsen, Jim Valentino, Robert Kirkman and myself. Our goal was not only to create a safe haven for our own products, but also a safe haven for any ideas, books, or commentary other creators may have.

Today I still encourage others to take the same action I took 20 years ago ... because I believe each and everyone one of you should give your ‘creative itch’ a scratch and try developing your own book, with your own characters, at least once in your life. If it’s a dismal failure, the worst that can happen is you’ll have to go back to where you started, beg for the job you had previously, and continue down the same path. But for the odd person who’s willing to put their foot in the door jam and endure a bit of pain, there’s an opportunity for some very successful careers. In its simplest form, what I’m trying to say is, “You can’t win the lotto if you don’t buy a ticket.” Trying to put out your characters is your own personal lottery ticket. I encourage each of you to gamble on that so that, 20 years from now, we can have this same conversation about Image and companies like ours, but with the addition of us talking about ten great titles, ten great ideas, that do not exist today. Hopefully, one of you reading at this moment will be the person who has one of those ten brilliant titles that we will all be jealous of. That’s what excites me most about comics right now. I love drawing and writing them, but I get more excited about watching the next generation create comics even better than we did.

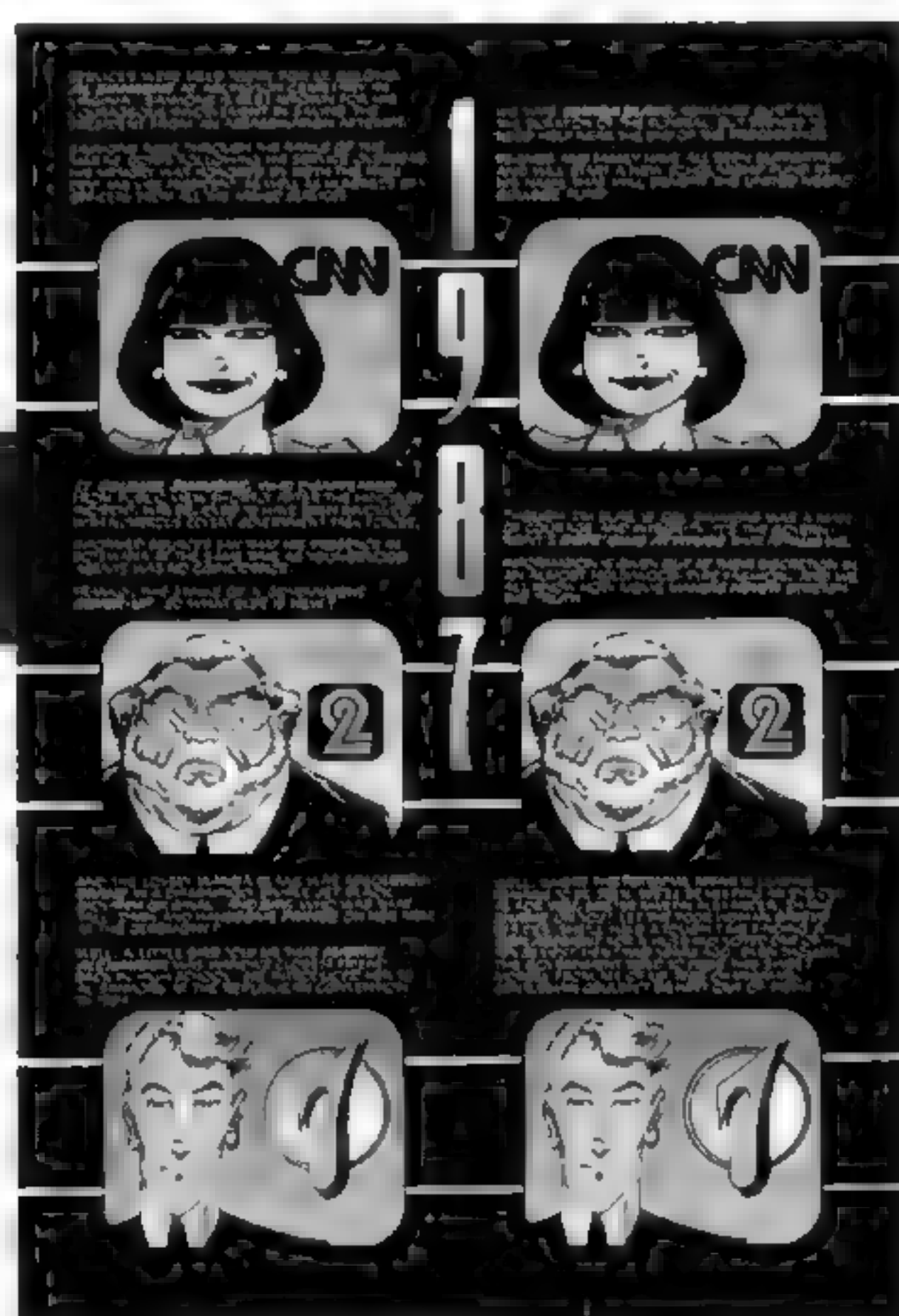
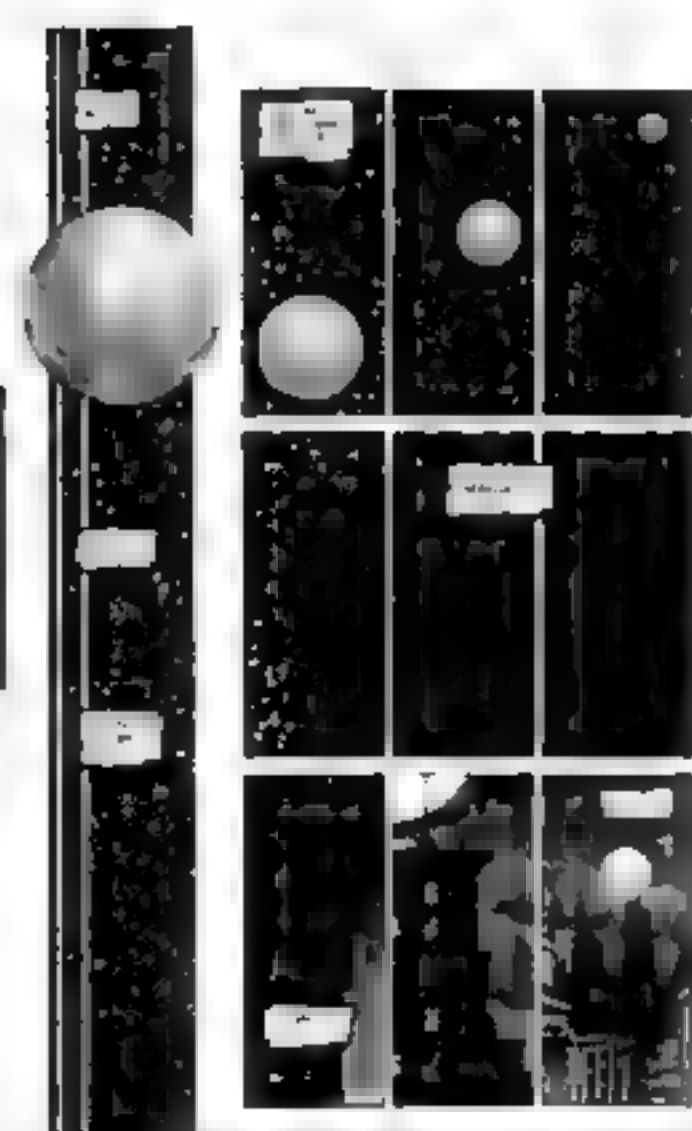
Bring us your ideas and put another smile across my face.

TODD



SPAWN #1

ART RETROSPECTIVE



Managing Editor Jen Cassidy sat down with *Spawn* creator Todd McFarlane to discuss his thoughts on the groundbreaking first issue of his iconic series, his creative process, and what's changed for the title over the past two decades.

This issue of *Spawn* (#220) intentionally mimicked the page layout of issue #1 panel for panel, but with the current *Spawn* storyline. The goal was to find a creative way to pay homage to the issue that introduced the world to the greatest Hell born antihero, and give observant fans a fun discovery moment.

Jen: First thing we're going to talk about is the "reporter page". You've said in the past that it was an interesting way to add depth and convey different story beats. The reporters have been a part of the book since issue one. Why did you introduce them, and why do you continue to use them to this day?

Todd: The reason for using the reporters is because I really wasn't a big fan of using captions in comic books, and even less a fan of having the main characters always give the reader all the information. The reporter page was a mechanism that allowed me to get information across in the book, but it was information that was from a third party that had no direct involvement in the events. So the information is as valid as any news you read in the paper or hear on TV.

Anyone delivering information on big actions is just doing so as an outside observer, with a limited amount of facts.

What I was trying to show was how the news and outside information can get distorted, compared to the reality people were reading in the comic book at the time. I thought the device worked, and we've kept it around 20 years because I think it's a helpful storytelling tool.

Jen: Why did you choose to show *Spawn* for the first time vertically, as opposed to horizontally, in a two-page spread in issue #1? Was there significance to the pose?

Todd: It was an easy artistic decision making for me. You have a book, the character's name is *Spawn*, and at some point you need to introduce him to the audience. No one knew who this character was in 1992. I believed he needed to be introduced in a big, dramatic fashion. What's more dramatic than doing it in a two-page spread?

The problem with a two-page spread is that it's built for a left to right read, more for width, not height. The only way I was going to get the height to show the stature of *Spawn* with his cape and such was to do the two-page spread sideways. I've got to tell you, I'm not really a fan of having to turn comic books to see the art, but it was the only way I was going to get the dramatic intro for *Spawn*.

Jen: Now we move on to Sam and Twitch. Why did you decide to introduce these two to the comic book, and provide them with such a stellar dynamic?

Todd: All the characters I introduced to this book are there for some reason. I knew this book was going to have a heavy urban feel to it, so instead of bringing in scientists and people who had sort of fantastic jobs, I was trying to go as street level as I could.

In the first issue, murders take place, so you need investigators. I needed to get the police involved because they needed to be a part of this urban world, and I wanted to bring two police officers into the fold that could return in future issues.

A majority of the writers who have taken a crack at writing *Sam and Twitch* tend to get it wrong. They don't understand the two characters, and how they work with each other. If you actually go back and re-read *Sam and Twitch*, you'll see that *Sam and Twitch* only have that comical edge to them when they're alone and by themselves, for the most part, or when they're talking to themselves. People always think these guys are clowning around, but they're not. When they're on the case or at a scene and talking to people, they've got their game face on. Only after they're walking away or in their car or office will the joking sides of their personalities come up. It's a dynamic you'd have with your

best friend or brother—the stuff nobody can poke fun of more than you, yourself, can. As soon as someone says something insulting to *Sam*, *Twitch* is the first guy to defend him, even if ten minutes later he gives *Sam* a zinger.

I also created them with the personalities that they have because I knew the book was going to have a heavy, dark feel to it, and I knew I was going to have to find places that gave levity to it. It's also the reason the *Clown* is the way he is, too. Having everything dark and morose all the time wouldn't necessarily be that fun of a read. So I had to introduce places where I could go counter to that from time-to-time.

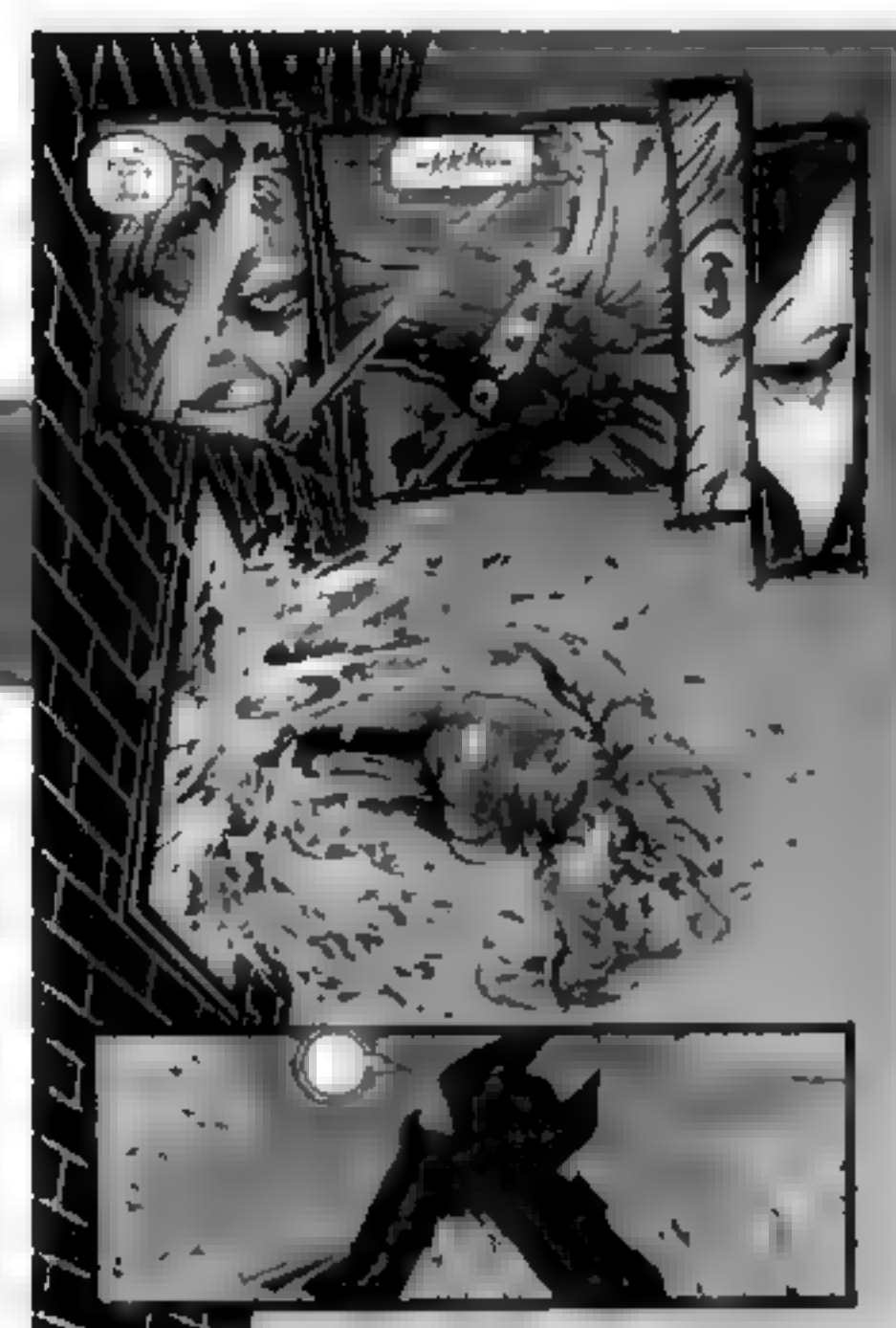
Jen: What about the power meter? Where did that come from, and why include it in the book? It seemed like you intentionally made it a design element in the title. Why did you make the choice to do so?

Todd: I was always a way bigger fan of *Batman* than *Superman*. The reason I say that is because *Superman* had unlimited powers. He could spin planets on his finger. There's very little jeopardy in the *Superman* book, whereas, technically, if *Batman* were thrown out of a window and didn't have his *Batarang*, he could hit the cement and die.

When I created *Spawn*, he had all these big giant fantastic powers, and if he wanted to use them, he could part seas.

SPAWN #1

ART RETROSPECTIVE



However, I didn't want to make it easy on him to do that.

The power meter was put in place to basically say, "You have one tank of gas, and when you're done using it, you go back to Hell." So if you had that knowledge, how slowly would you use the gas? In some cases you might not even use it, but instead, your own intelligence and skills, and not rely on your magic powers, even to the point of taking a physical beating. Yes, Spawn can be like Superman, if I need him to be, but I put an Achilles heel on him to have him act more like Batman.

Jen: Where are we at with Spawn's power meter today? It had major prominence from the inception of the title, but has dwindled in its appearance over the years.

Todd: The meter will be coming back, but will be different in some ways. At the beginning of *Spawn*, the power meter counted down as Spawn used his powers. If it hit zero, he was in trouble. Now, with the power meter's return, things will be turned on their heads. The opposite is happening in a lot of instances. The power meter is starting to count up.

Jen: We saw it start doing so in issue #185.

Todd: Right. We introduced it, it started low, and now it's going to start counting up. The question associated with it is still somewhat of the same. At the beginning it was, "What if it gets to zero?" Now, it's, "What if it gets to 9:9:9:9, plus one?" Now what happens? Does the nuclear bomb go off? How long until that happens?

Jen: Pin ups were really popular in books back in the day. What was the meaning of doing them and having other artists do them in your books?

Todd: At the end of the day I was just a comic geek, and it was cool to have artwork included from artists you liked. I was always a big George Perez fan, so it was great having him do a pinup in issue #1. He also did the cover to issue #101. Heck, I should have brought him back for #201!

Back to the question, it wasn't anything more than asking people to contribute cool art to a book, giving their version of your characters.

Jen: The look of the lettering for *Spawn* in the beginning was very specific. There was a lot of, as you like to say, "bounce" on the pages. Why did you envision it this way, and how did you work with Tom to get it to what we saw in issue #1? Where has it evolved to now?

Todd: Tom Orzechowski, who has been involved in more pages of *Spawn* than anyone else, including myself, was intentionally picked. I thought he was the best letterer in the industry, since there was so much variety in his books at the time

At the beginning I would actually write on the artwork itself. I would indicate a lot of the bounce, and then Tom would take his skill and bring it to the next level. It was even things

like, and it hasn't been one hundred percent accurate, but the intent was there, making all the balloons ovals of some shape. I didn't want them to be hand drawn, I wanted them to look like they had been done with stencils. I tried to keep captions from touching the top or side borders, so they were floating. Also, we gave a unique balloon to Spawn. There were many intentional decisions made all along the way. There are intentional decisions today, too, when I work on the lettering with Tom.

I think lettering is the most undervalued piece of the final art. I think the sum of a comic book is better than the parts, and the lettering is a big piece of that.

Jen: You have a knack for finding really creative ways to story tell with your layouts. Was there a reason you laid out issue #1 the way that you did?

Todd: Issue #1, artistically, was showing the fractured mind of this guy who made a pact, came back, was alive and dead—he was scrambled. The page layouts from the first issue were supposed to convey that. How does this confused man with limited knowledge start piecing his life back together, and what does it all mean as he moves forward?

Jen: When did you decide to move the ads to the back of the comic?

Todd: Pretty quickly. It became apparent to me that I wanted to have control over the page turns. There was only one way I was going to know what pages were going to be "turners", and that was to move all the ads out of the way. Odd pages were on the right, even pages on the left, so if I was ever going to do a big reveal, then we had to make sure it was an even number page.

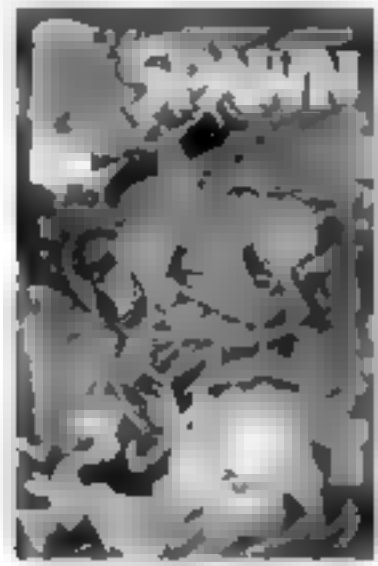
Jen: I, personally, feel ads ruin the reading experience because you're interrupted when you don't necessarily want to be.

Do you have any additional thoughts on *Spawn* then to *Spawn* now? Obviously, we know the subject matter has matured, that you're mindset has changed since you initially introduced this character. The title has become more sophisticated, more noir, and much darker.

Todd: I think one of the reasons *Spawn* has survived for 20 years is because of its evolution. Early on, it was more of a classic superhero, comic book read. Now it's more urban and sophisticated. Even the look of it, the people and the shadows and all of that are by-products of it being around for 20 years. To me, it doesn't make sense to keep doing the same thing over and over. I've been involved in this book for 20 years and I don't want to keep doing what I've done before. I need to evolve for my own artistic wants and needs. I keep hoping that people will continue to go along for the ride.



20 YEARS OF SPAWN



1992

June: *Spawn* #1 released, selling 1.7 million copies

July: *Spawn* #2 released. First appearance of Clown/Violator. First appearance of Jim Downing (cameo)

November: *Spawn* #6 released. First appearance of Overtkill

1994

April: *Spawn/Batman* one-shot, written by Frank Miller and illustrated by Todd McFarlane is published by Image Comics.

May-July: Three-issue *Violator* mini-series, written by Alan Moore, released.

October: *Spawn* #25 released. First appearance of Tremor/Richard Masullo. Illustrated by Image Comics co-founder, Marc Silvestri

December: Todd Toys releases first series of *Spawn* action figures

1996

January: First issue of the four-part *Spawn/WildC.A.T.S.* #1 crossover, written by Alan Moore, released.

June: *Spawn* #50 released.

August: *Spawn* #52 released, guest starring Erik Larsen's *Savage Dragon*.

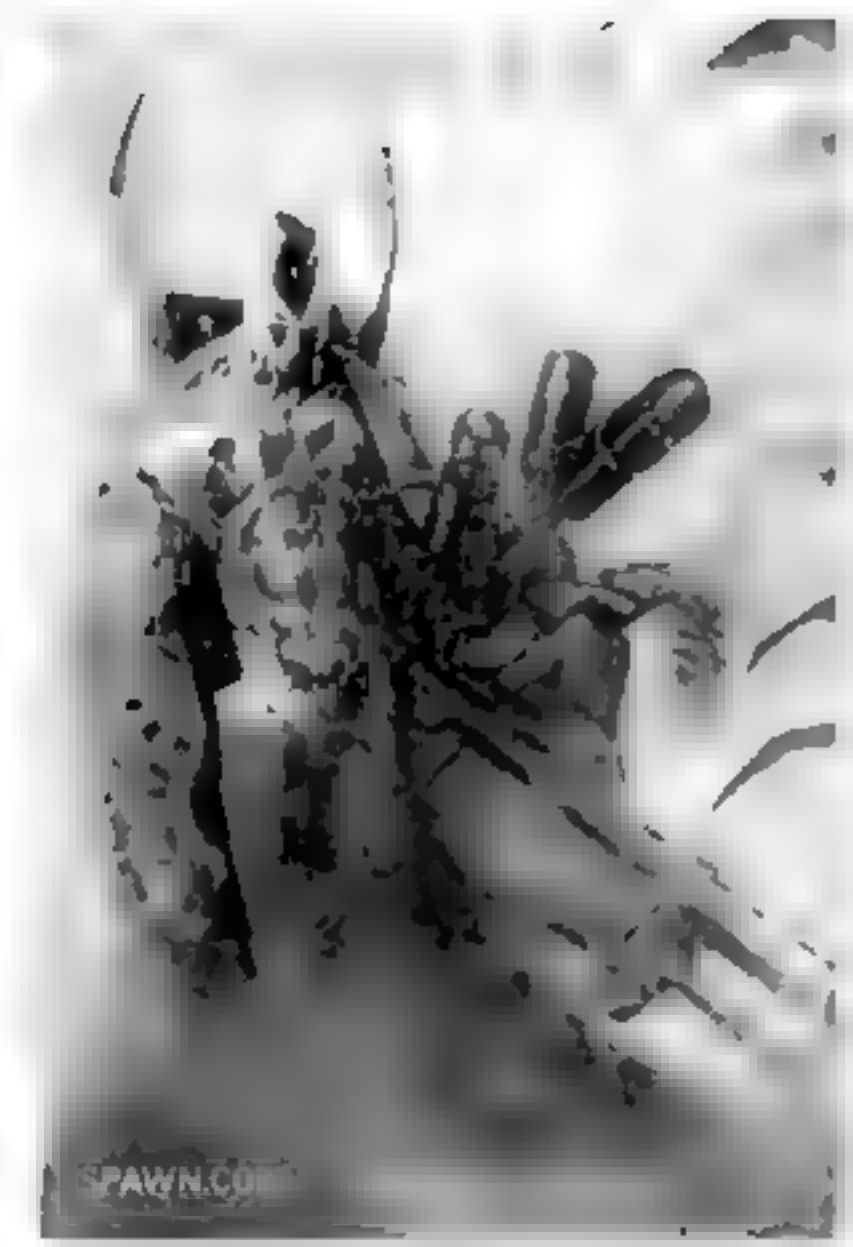
September: *Curse of the Spawn* #1 released.



1998

May: The second season of *Todd McFarlane's Spawn* premieres on HBO

September: First volume of *Shadows of Spawn* manga released in Japan.



2000

August: *HellSpawn* #1 released. Brian Michael Bendis and Ashley Wood introduce a new, darker, urban take on the *Spawn* mythos

November: *Spawn* #100 released. Al Simmons defeats Malebolgia in Hell

December: *Spawn* #101 released. Angel Medina takes over as regular series artist.



2002

March: *Spawn* #116 released. First appearance of Redeemer III

May: *Spawn* #117 released, celebrating the book's 10 Anniversary

1993

March: *Spawn* #9 released. First appearance of Coghostro and Medieval Spawn.

December: *Spawn* #16 released. Greg Capullo takes over as regular series artist with the first issue in the three-part "Reflections" story arc. First appearance of Anti-Spawn (AKA Redeemer I)

1995

May: *Spawn* #31 released. First appearance of Redeemer II.

June-September: *Spawn: Blood Feud* mini-series, written by Alan Moore, is released, as *Spawn* battles the the Curse

July: *Spawn* #33 released. First appearance of The Freak (cameo).



1997

May: The animated series, *Todd McFarlane's Spawn*, premieres on HBO.

July: *Spawn* movie soundtrack released, debuting at #7 on *Billboard's* Top 200 U.S. chart

August: The live-action *Spawn* feature film is released.



1999

March: *Spawn: The Dark Ages* #1 released

May: The third season of *Todd McFarlane's Spawn* premieres on HBO.

June: *Spawn the Undead* #1 released.

July: *Cy Gor* #1 released.

August: *Sam and Twitch* #1 released. Fan-favorite detectives star in their own title, written and illustrated by Brian Michael Bendis and Angel Medina. *Todd McFarlane's Spawn* wins "Outstanding Animated Program" Emmy.

September: *Spawn* #87 released. First appearance of Mammon.

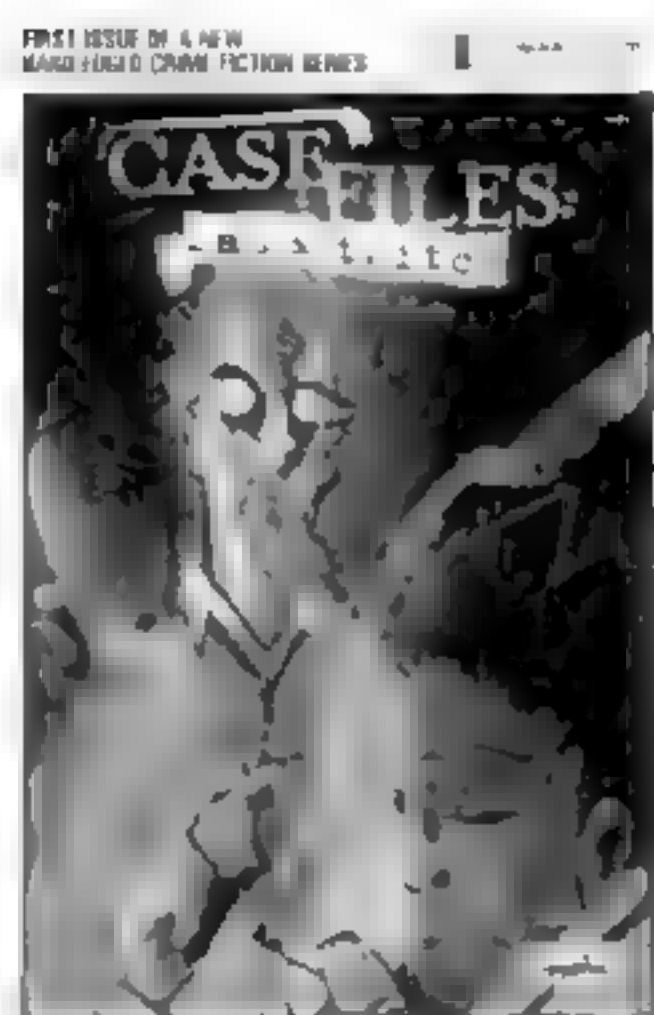
2001

March: *Sam and Twitch* #20 released. Todd McFarlane crafts "The John Doe Affair" with artists Alex Maleev and Paul Lee





20 YEARS OF SPAWN



2003

June: *Case Files: Sam & Twitch* #1 released. An all new crime series, giving detectives Sam Burke and Max "Twitch" Williams their second monthly comic book series.



2005

October: *Spawn* #150 released.

December: *Shadows of Spawn Vol. 1* released in U.S

2007

January: The *Spawn.com* online comic, *The Adventures of Spawn* #1, is published for the first time

February: *Spawn* #165 released, featuring the first comic book appearance and origin story of fan-favorite action figure, Mandarin Spawn.

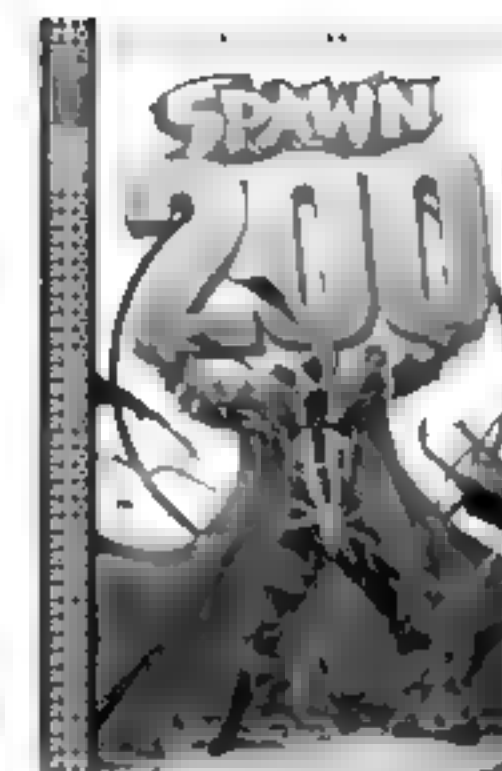
May: *Spawn* #166 released. *Spawn: Godslayer* #1 released, re-imaging the *Spawn* mythos in an epic world of fantasy and magic.



2009

May: *Spawn: Origins Vol. 1* released, launching a new series of premium format trade paperback collections

July: *Spawn: Architects of Fear*, illustrated by French artist Aleks Briclot.



2011

January: *Spawn* #200 released, illustrated by Michael Golden and Todd McFarlane. *Spawn* #201 released. Szymon Kudranski takes over as regular series artist. First Appearance of Bludd.

May: *Spawn* #207 released, beginning four-part "Q&A" story arc. The demonic, Hel, from the pages of *HellSpawn*, makes her first appearance in the core *Spawn* title.

November: *Spawn* #213 released, beginning six-part "The Gathering Storm" story arc.

December: *Spawn* #214 is released, marking the fifteenth issue released in 2011.

May: *Spawn: Simony*, illustrated by French artist Aleks Briclot, is released.



October: *Spawn* #161 released, beginning the "Armageddon" story arc.



2008
October: *Spawn* #185 released. "End Game" story arc begins - death of Al Simmons, Jim Downing becomes the world's newest HellSpawn. Image Comics co-founder Whilce Portacio begins run as new series artist

December: *Spawn: Book of the Dead* released



2010
March: *Spawn* #196 released, illustrated by Image Comics co-founder, Rob Liefeld.

May: *Sam and Twitch: The Writer* #1 (of 4) released.

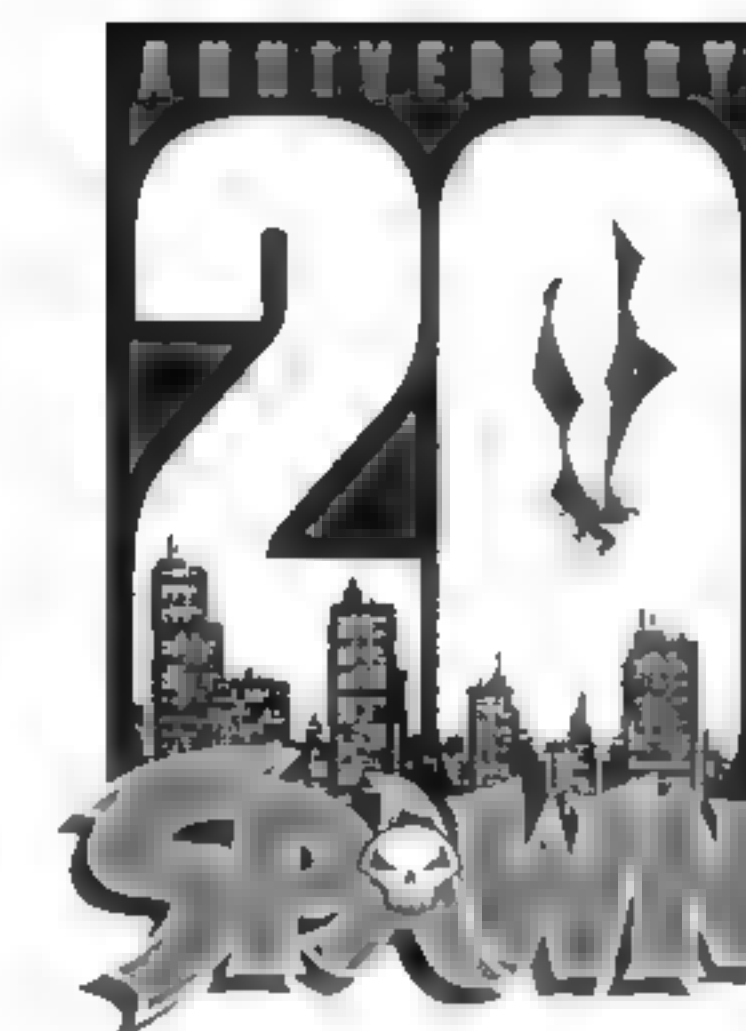
August: *Spawn* #198 released. First appearance of Patient 46.

September: *Spawn* #199 released, illustrated by Image Comics co-founder, Erik Larsen.

2012
May: *Spawn* #219 released, featuring the conclusion of the epic *Spawn* vs. Malebolgia showdown.

June: 20th Anniversary of *Spawn*. Issue #220 released, commemorating two decades of the long-running independent title.





20 YEARS, 220 ISSUES ... AND COUNTING.





☐ The Activity TP Vol. 1 ☐ America's Got Powers #3 ☐ Artifacts #19 ☐ Artifacts TP Vol. 4 ☐ Bloodstrike #29 ☐ Bulletproof Coffin Disinterred #6 (of 8)



☐ Chew #27 ☐ Creator Owned Heroes #1 ☐ Dancer #2 ☐ Danger Club #3 ☐ Darkness #104 ☐ Epic Kill #2



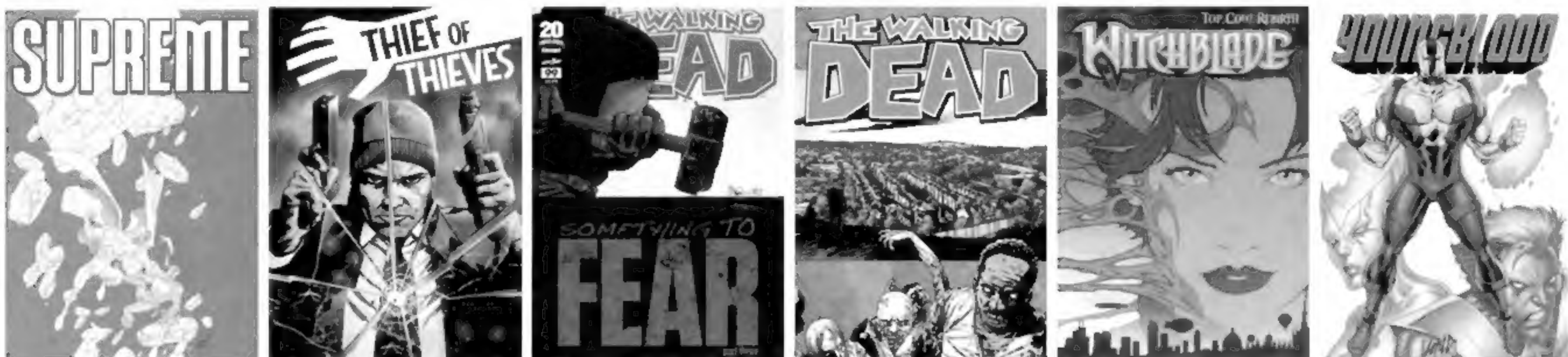
☐ Fatale #6 ☐ Fatale TP Vol. 1 Death Chases Me ☐ Glory #27 ☐ Grim Leaper #2 (of 4) ☐ Hack/Slash #17 ☐ Hell Yeah #4



☐ Liberty Meadows Sunday Collection HC Book 1 ☐ Manhattan Projects #4 ☐ Mind The Gap #2 ☐ Morning Glories TP Vol. 3 P.E. ☐ Near Death #9 ☐ No Place Like Home #5



☐ Peter Panzerfaust #5 ☐ Prophet #26 ☐ Saga #4 ☐ Savage Dragon Invasion TP ☐ Secret #3 ☐ Skullkickers #15



☐ Supreme #65 ☐ Thief of Thieves #5 ☐ The Walking Dead #99 ☐ The Walking Dead TP Vol. 16 A Larger World ☐ Witchblade #157 ☐ Youngblood #72

Question of the Month

"Swamp Thing. Specifically, Alan Moore's run. As a kid, I loved the Swamp Thing movie, and managed to convince my Mom to buy me the trade. I didn't realize just how different it was, both from the movie and from the comics I'd read. So, basically, having a whole bunch of Alan Moore poured into my head as a ten year old really changed what I thought comics were and what they could be. It may also have resulted in this beard."

Justin Jordan
FOR KITCHEN TALK: 10/10/2011

"WHAT COMIC CHANGED YOUR PERSPECTIVE OF THE MEDIUM?"

"A faculty advisor at my university recommended 'Understanding Comics' by Scott McCloud, and that got me very good at about the potential of comics. After reading 'Understanding Comics' I discovered a lot of work and I think my biggest here was Scott McCloud because of his pacing and storytelling. Paul Pope's 'Escape' was a big eye opener. I loved the essays where he wrote about comics. I really loved the giant size of the book and the storytelling. It was visually full of energy and movement."

Mark Andrew Smith
FOR KITCHEN TALK: 10/10/2011

"Arrack by Moebius. It was unlike anything else I had ever read. You can tell it's the work of a single creator just doing what he wants without reservation. The world created in these short stories is so lush and surreal. And the story-telling is so well done it's really unique the way he arranged the panels on the page. Arrack is also a good example of the power of silent/wordless storytelling in comics. It really inspired me to explore more in my own work."

Kan Garing
FOR KITCHEN TALK: 10/10/2011

"For me, it was HEAVY METAL magazine. I'd then I have been reading mostly comics off the newsstand and when I got the first issue in my hand I was introduced to an adult world of genre storytelling by some of the greatest talents from Europe. It's probably when I first fell in love with the work of moebius as well. The idea that comics could be so out there really opened up my thinking and inspired me in so many ways."

Henry Palmarini
FOR KITCHEN TALK: 10/10/2011

"I discovered The Dark Knight Returns #1 at just the right age. Everything about it -- the writing, the art, the format -- told me comics weren't the same anymore."

Ben Murr
FOR KITCHEN TALK: 10/10/2011

the word

EXPERIENCE CREATIVITY

For the latest Image Comics news and previews: (1) visit www.imagecomics.com (2) friend on Facebook (3) follow on Twitter (@imagecomics)



Steve Niles is the creator of the groundbreaking vampire comic series 30 Days of Night, as well as Criminal Macabre and Aleister Arcane. He is currently writing two upcoming Image Comics comics, Crime and Terror, drawn by Scott Morse, and Chin Music, drawn by Tony Harris. He lives in Los Angeles with his girlfriend Monica, two dogs, four cats, and Gil the tortoise.

What is the single work of which you're most proud? That's really hard. I was very proud of Mystery Society before it got the axe. I suppose my work with Cal McDonald because I've been at it so long and now there are dozens of comics, novels and maybe a movie. I never get tired of writing him. But really, Freaks of the Heartland is my fave because Greg Ruth made it ten times more beautiful than I ever imagined.

What are you working on right now? A stroke, I think. Actually today I'm working on Chin Music and Nosteratu Wars, two of my newest creator-owned books.

What's the best part of your job? The freedom I have to write and create what I want. In comics these days being able to work without company mandates or having to check in with 11 other writers to finish a script is huge. I check myself often when I start to get stressed. Sure, it can get hard, but at the end of the day I get to write about vampires and robots. I'm very lucky.

What's the worst part of your job? Getting paid. I finance a lot of the books I do, or work free for backend, so I do a lot of nail biting around the end of the month. As I create more and more projects I own and control, it's getting easier. The more I deal direct with fans/retailers the better.

What's the weirdest part of your job? The recognition modern creators receive. I grew up not even knowing what most creators looked like. These days our faces are very public. And of course the only time I get recognized is when I'm at Home Depot in my sweats, ripped tee and bed-head.

How did you first discover comics? I was a maybe 4 years old when I started. In the late 60's, and 70's you could walk down the street without tripping over a place selling comics. They were everywhere. My earliest memory of reading a comic was being in church, so small my feet didn't go over the seat, and I had a Creepy Magazine in my lap. I remember because my Mom was very upset about the cover and the fact that I was reading it in church.

If you weren't working in comics, what would you be doing? I'm sure I'd be doing something in publishing, writing or playing music. I've spent my life making things. I don't really know any other way except working retail or being a short order chef -- my previous jobs.

What's the best thing a fan has ever said to you? "Your stuff got me back into comics." I hear that every so often and it really does make me feel good.

Who is the biggest influence on your work? Richard Matheson for overall writing and Alan Moore for comics. Forget all the noise around Moore. He's a rock-solid writer. Bernie Wrightson made me want to do comics though.

Own up to one of your guilty pleasures. I recently watched an Andy Griffith marathon...from my own collection. I have a weakness for some really silly old sitcoms.

What was the last comic book you bought? Heart by Blair Butler and Kevin Mellon.

If you could be someone else for a day, who would it be? That's easy, Rick Remender. I want to know what it feels like to walk around with such a sumptuous body.

Pick three things you couldn't live without. My partner Monica Richards, my amazing friends... and my book collection (that includes comics).

What's the strangest thing you have in your house? A giant African tortoise.

What is one of your favorite places? Vasquez Rocks. Because I like pretending I'm hunting Gorn.

What music are you listening to these days? Lots of old punk stuff and a lot of soundtracks. Wake up to Bad Brains, work to Russian Circles and Clint Mansell.

What is your favorite film of all time? This week it's John Carpenter's *the THING*. It's just about the perfect horror film.

Who is your best friend? Bernie Wrightson.

What is the worst advice you've ever received? "Move to LA. The people are so nice."

When was the last time you were truly frightened? I dunno. When was the last GOP debate?

Name someone you really admire and explain why. I admire Mike Mignola a lot and I really look up to him. Aside from being an amazing natural talent he is the creators, creator. He does what he wants, never compromises his vision and produces great book after great book. He also has an amazing family. I want to be Mike when I grow up.

What would you like to see happen in comics in the next 12 months? I'd like to see moves to expand the market and I think creator-owned is the key. The leotard boys have had a 70-year shot and they've done all they can. It is abundantly clear that, aside from the summer films, the general public doesn't care about reading superhero comics so it is up to creators doing indies to get out there and show the world what ELSE can be done with words and pictures.

What the world needs now is... Love, love, love and new comics.

SPAWN #220



TODD MCFARLANE RETURNS TO SPAWN AS WRITER AND COVER ARTIST! Celebrate SPAWN's 20th Anniversary with this special landmark release. Ben Browning has long been a man lost -- confused by his missing past, haunted at every turn and manipulated by forces beyond his control. No longer. With his past finally coming into focus and a full understanding of the man he once was just out of reach, Ben embraces the full might of his horrific half-brother powers to piece together a mystery that has this to the very core of the Spawn universe.

PLANETOID #1



Silas, an ex-soldier turned space pirate, finds himself stranded on a mysterious planet in alien territory. As he explores the long-abandoned industrial ruins of the planet's surface he will have to fend off rogue mechanical creatures, ruling cybernauts, and a hostile alien military with a beauty on his mind. Silas will have to rely on resourcefulness and hard-boiled survival tactics in order to stay alive and ultimately unlock the secrets of a planet where survival is a luxury and escape an impossibility.

CARBON GREY VOL. 2 #1



"DAUGHTERS OF STONE" Months have passed since the events of volume one. By order of the Queen an expedition force sets out in search of the real stone of Gottfaust. Anna hunts down the conspirators behind an assassination attempt on Her Majesty. What has become of the sisters in exile, Eva and Cisselle?

THE RED/RE[A]D DIARY FLIPBOOK HC



KRISTIAN'S European Album is now translated in English by TERRY KRISTIANSEN and STEVEN T. SEAGLE. But in a unique flip-book format, the book is also "re-mixed" with a completely different script devised by SEAGLE before he collaborated on the translation. Both versions -- THE RED DIARY -- a tale of art forgery and World War and THE RE[A]D DIARY -- a tale of identity theft and lost love -- comprise this unique graphic novel from SEAGLE and KRISTIANSEN -- the Eisner nominated/winning team behind the acclaimed Vertigo graphic novel *It's a Bird...*

TODD McFARLANE
PRODUCTIONS



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